

N.S.

Edman

Nurse faults controversial abortion doctor's

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP — A controversial physician's method of caring for patients having abortions so upset a registered nurse working for him that she decided to quit, the nurse testified yesterday.

Dr. Steven Chase Brigham's record is on trial before an administrative law judge here as the state seeks to have his license to practice medicine in New Jersey revoked or suspended.

Brigham has a long history of trouble with health investigators in four states. His license has been limited in New Jersey and California and temporarily suspended in New York. He has agreed to stop practicing medicine in Pennsylvania.

His license remains in good standing in Florida, where he replaced a doctor who was shot outside an abortion clinic in Pensacola.

Lynette Zielke, of Turnersville, testified yesterday that she was a nurse assisting Brigham when he performed a first-trimester abortion on a 14-year-old girl in October 1993.

Zielke said she thought the girl was overdosed, and that Brigham risked choking the girl by placing a handful of gauze in her mouth.

"I whispered to (Brigham) 'Do you really want to do this?' and he said, 'Yeah, I want to give her a little extra sedation. She needs it,'" Zielke recalled on the stand. "He said she would be OK and I said, 'Yeah, but we won't be able to wake her up later.'"

Under cross-examination, Brigham's attorney, Nathan L. Dembin of New York City, got Zielke to admit that prior to working with Brigham, she

had no experience in abortion procedures.

He also got Zielke to admit that the 14-year-old, when asked, said she wanted the gauze in her mouth. Dembin said gauze is often used by doctors to give their patients something to bite down on to help alleviate pain. The defense also attempted to portray Zielke as being upset because she had not yet received her last paycheck from Brigham when she made her initial statement to state investigators.

Dembin said the state's case is weak and poorly investigated and that his

client has performed thousands of abortions. He noted that abortions, especially second-trimester abortions, are inherently risky and that five patients can't be used to justify revoking or suspending Brigham's license.

"The charges should be dismissed," Dembin said. "When you haven't got the goods, you throw something on the wall and hope something sticks. We submit to you it's not going to."

Brigham is charged with 14 counts of negligence, gross negligence, malpractice or incompetence, and professional misconduct concerning five

abortions performed in New Jersey and New York. Most of the cases involve complications arising during second-trimester abortions.

Deputy Attorney General Linda Ershaw-Levenberg said in one case, a New Jersey woman identified only as M.B., sought an abortion at Brigham's Spring Valley, N.Y., office in November 1993. She was 26 weeks pregnant.

Ershaw-Levenberg said while Brigham was performing the procedure, M.B. suffered cervical lacerations, and that Brigham did not make sure the cuts were properly repaired.

actions

The patient began hemorrhaging but, the state alleges, it was hours before Brigham called an ambulance to rush her to a hospital where she had to have a hysterectomy.

The state alleges Brigham failed to exercise reasonable medical judgment, and grossly mismanaged M.B.'s care.

The state also alleges gross incompetence on Brigham's part in a case involving a woman identified as D.V., who came into the doctor's Voorhees office to determine how far along she was in her pregnancy.

BRIGHAM