

Brigham

Slain doctor's replacement quits Florida abortion clinic

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PENSACOLA, Fla. — A doctor who replaced a physician slain by an anti-abortion zealot at a Pensacola women's clinic has stopped working there following disciplinary action in other states, a spokeswoman for Florida's Board of Medicine said yesterday.

Meanwhile, a Pensacola area anti-abortion activist was to appear before a federal grand jury in Virginia that is investigating the possibility of a national conspiracy to commit violence against abortion clinics and providers, including three murders here.

Staffers at the Ladies Center, where Dr. Steven Chase Brigham replaced Dr. John Bayard Britton after Britton was murdered July 29, told the Florida board that he stopped working there several weeks ago, said board spokeswoman Barbara Kemp.

Brigham also agreed last week to stop practicing in New Jersey until an administrative law judge rules on his fitness as a physician. New York revoked his license four weeks ago. Before that he agreed to stop practicing in Pennsylvania.

Accusations against him in those states included injuring women during abortions, false advertising, unsanitary practices and offering to perform an illegal third-trimester abortion.

Florida officials, citing a secrecy law, refused to say whether he is

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being investigated in the Sunshine State. Anti-abortion activists held a news conference Tuesday in Tallahassee to urge that his Florida license be revoked, although conceding they had no evidence he provided inadequate care here.

Brigham's lawyer, Nathan L. Dembin, was unavailable for comment.

A woman who answered the phone at the Ladies Center declined to say whether the clinic has found a new doctor and said administrator Linda Taggart was unavailable for comment.

Britton, 69, of Fernandina Beach and his volunteer escort, retired Air Force Lt. Col. James Barrett, 74, of Pensacola were killed as they drove up to the Ladies Center in Barrett's pickup truck. Barrett's wife, June, 69, also a clinic escort, was wounded.

Paul Hill, a former minister in the Presbyterian Church in America and Orthodox Presbyterian Church, was convicted of murdering the two men

and attempting to murder Mrs. Barrett. Hill, 40, of Pensacola was sentenced to death for the murders.

Britton's predecessor at the Ladies Center, Dr. David Gunn, 47, of Eufaula, Ala., was fatally shot outside another abortion clinic here, on March 10, 1993. Protester Michael F. Griffin, 32, of Pensacola was convicted of murdering Gunn and is serving a life sentence without possibility of parole for 25 years.

John Burt, who was leading a protest outside Pensacola Women's Medical Services when Gunn was shot and who helped Hill photograph Britton for an "unwanted" poster several months before Britton was killed, said he had been ordered to appear before the Virginia grand jury yesterday.

He said he initially had been told to appear Jan. 19, but his testimony was moved up after FBI agents questioned him for over three hours Tuesday.

Burt, who operates Our Father's House, a home for unwed mothers and troubled women in nearby Milton, said the agents asked him about abortion opponents in California, Oregon and Maryland.

He said he was threatened with prosecution for perjury if he failed to answer their questions truthfully.

"They're real interested in a second man being associated with Paul Hill," Burt said. "They're hunting for a conspiracy when there is nothing. It's people acting on their own."