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Doctor to Pay Children of Inglewood Abortion Victim

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A doctor who once operated the state's busiest abortion hospital has agreed to pay an undisclosed amount of cash to three grown children whose mother died three years ago following an abortion at the Inglewood facility.

Attorneys for Dr. Morton Barke approved the payment Tuesday in Torrance Superior Court to settle a lawsuit filed in 1987 by the three teen-age children of Belinda Byrd.

At the request of Barke's lawyers, Judge J. Gary Hastings ordered that the terms of the settlement remain confidential.

"All I can tell you is that the settlement was favorable to the Byrd family," said family attorney Jack Schuler. Barke's lawyers could not be reached for comment.

Byrd's death after an abortion at Inglewood Women's Hospital was one factor that led state health officials to investigate and close down the clinic, saying it provided inadequate care and endangered the health of patients.

Family Planning Associates Medical Group, an outpatient abortion clinic under new ownership, now operates at the same location at 426 E. 99th St.

Byrd, 37, was in her 19th week of pregnancy when she came to the clinic on Jan. 24, 1987. Hers was one of 74 abortions performed that day by Dr. Steven Pine.

The hospital had performed 11,330 abortions the year before, state officials said.

Byrd became unconscious in the hours after the operation and was taken to Centinela Hospital Medical Center, where she fell into a coma and died three days later.

The Los Angeles County Coroner's Office concluded that Byrd died of a punctured uterus suffered during the operation.

Defense attorneys said the hospital, Pine and Barke were not negligent. They blamed the woman's death, instead, on a blood clot in one lung.

A Norwalk Superior Court jury heard the case last year and found that Barke and the hospital had been negligent in Byrd's care. But the jury could not agree whether the negligence contributed to Byrd's death.

A second trial in the case was pending in Torrance when the settlement was reached Tuesday.

Pine paid Byrd's family a \$250,000 settlement during the first trial.

That money and the latest settlement will be divided by Byrd's son, Kelvin, 19, and her two daughters, Kelly Taplette, 16, and Kaisy Taplette, 14.