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## Mom Came Here From N.Y. For Procedure

By [Colleen Heild / Journal Investigative Reporter](#) on Sun, Feb 3, 2013

The Orthodox Jewish mother of a 3-year-old came to Albuquerque from her home in Brooklyn, N.Y., late in her second pregnancy.

Details of her past medical history and eventual termination of her 35-week-old fetus in Albuquerque in May 2011 became part of the public record in a state Medical Board disciplinary proceeding involving her Albuquerque physician, Dr. Shelley Sella.

Sella is accused of “gross negligence” in administering certain uterine stimulants to the woman, who had a uterine rupture during the abortion procedure. She denies the allegations and contends there was a known risk of rupture because of the patient’s prior cesarean section.

Identifying information about the patient was redacted by the medical board staff in records obtained by the Journal. Those records refer to her only as M.L.

What makes the case unusual from many other investigations undertaken by the board staff is that M.L. didn’t file the complaint against Sella.

Her case might never have come to light if not for the fact that pro-life advocates obtained a copy of the 911 emergency call made by the staff at Albuquerque’s Southwestern Women’s Options clinic seeking an ambulance after her rupture occurred.

Local advocates, joined by the national anti-abortion group Operation Rescue, turned over 13 such 911 recordings to the medical board in 2011, requesting an investigation to determine whether there had been standard of care violations that endangered the lives of the women involved.

The physicians’ actions in all but one of those calls were deemed within the standard of care.

But the emergency call involving M.L. stood out.

Records show M.L. was told at 20 weeks into the pregnancy by her doctors in New York that the fetus appeared normal.

But at 33 weeks along, she learned that the fetus had “very poor prognosis ... with brain and cranial defects,” according to a filing by Sella’s attorneys. The head was enlarged and the fetus was just six to seven weeks shy of being full term.

M.L. traveled with her husband for the abortion, because “there was no hospital or clinic that could treat her in New York,” according to a case filing by Sella’s attorneys.

“She was extremely distraught,” Sella testified at the closed disciplinary hearing last November. “I would say that she was on the more distraught, anxious tearful spectrum of third-trimester patients who already are in a very desperate state of mind.”

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