

Anchorage doctor's license suspended

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ANCHORAGE (AP) - A well-known women's health advocate in Anchorage has been stripped of her medical license by the Alaska State Medical Board, which cited a hospital report that the doctor failed to meet minimum standards for obstetric care.

Colleen Murphy's license was suspended Thursday at an emergency meeting held by the board without a hearing for the doctor. Board members said they deemed the meeting necessary because Murphy posed a "clear and immediate danger to the public health and safety."

The board action stemmed from a decision by Alaska Regional Hospital in Anchorage to cancel Murphy's obstetric privileges after a committee review of hospital records for 10 patients, according to a written suspension notice from the state Division of Occupational Licensing.

After reviewing the 2004 records and interviewing Murphy, the hospital committee concluded she failed to meet the minimum standard of care for five of the 10 patients. The committee cited an inappropriate technique during a delivery, delayed response when caring for patients and other concerns, according to the notice. The committee's report was not made public.

Paul Stockler, Murphy's attorney, said neither he nor Murphy knew a suspension hearing had been set, although the doctor knew she was being investigated. A state investigator asked Murphy earlier this year to voluntarily stop practicing obstetrics until Alaska Regional had finished its review of her work, according to the suspension notice. She declined.

The medical board does not have to notify doctors about an emergency hearing to remove their medical license, said Leslie Gallant, the medical board's executive administrator. Stockler said he intends to ask for a hearing, as state law allows.

Murphy, 49, said she believes the suspension was politically motivated. Patients cited in the reviewed medical records are still a part of her private medical practice, she said.

"I'm not afraid to speak up," she said. "Some people admire me for it, and some people don't like me for it. I guess some people don't like me right now."

In recent years, Murphy has talked publicly about increasing insurance coverage for birth control, making it easier for women to get emergency contraception, and the abortion pill.

Neither Gallant nor investigator Colin Matthews would say why the board called for an emergency meeting instead of waiting to deal with the matter at its next regular board meeting, scheduled for later this month in Petersburg.

Murphy's obstetric privileges at Alaska Regional were restricted in April, according to state documents. At the time, Stockler said, Murphy requested a hospital hearing about the matter, which is set for early August.

Stockler said he couldn't understand why the medical board removed her license Thursday - more than three months after Alaska Regional restricted her privileges but three weeks before the hospital hearing.

Information from: Anchorage Daily News, <http://www.adn.com>

http://www.adn.com/news/alaska/ap_alaska/story/6688501p-6575329c.html