

Unveil \$60 million library plan

New 10- to 12-story building in Cultural Center complex; Page 3

Cooler

Partly sunny with a high around 50. Details on Page 93.

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CHICAGO Sun-Times

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★★★★★
Turf
Final

15¢ city and suburbs; 25¢ elsewhere

The abortion lottery

Women take chances with 'tryout' doctors

By Pamela Zekman
and Pamela Warrick

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When a woman goes to an abortion clinic, she entrusts her body to strangers—doctors she knows nothing about, doctors she has never met.

On Michigan Av., women entrust their bodies to doctors who may be mere mechanics on the abortion assembly line.

They may be moonlighting residents, general practitioners with little or no training in women's medicine, or even unlicensed physicians. While slick clinic brochures promise only board-certified obstetrician-gynecologists, few have earned even that accreditation.

These doctors rarely tell patients their names. To many, patients are not people. They are profits.

During the five months The Sun-Times and Better Government Assn. investigated the city's abortion business, we heard from many of these doctors' victims—women who were awakened nights after their abortions by chills and fever, uncontrolled bleeding and painfully debilitating cramps.

Some had dead tissue left inside them. Others had massive infections, perforated bowels, or punctured uteri. Some ultimately underwent complete hysterectomies—the removal of all reproductive organs.

Former patients have filed lawsuits against doctors in all four of the Michigan Av. abortion mills where dangerous medical practices were uncovered during the investigation. But many women still suffer quietly, afraid to even admit they've had abortions, let alone press public charges against the doctors who performed them.

At least two women who received Magnificent Mile abortions are dead.

At Biogenetics Ltd., 520 N. Michigan, doctors new to the abortion business—often

Act for more inspections

Thompson gives order; Page 3

Third in a series

mere residents from Cook County Hospital looking for extra income—are "tried out" on patients by clinic director Dr. Carlos Baldoceda.

Baldoceda, 33, who was educated in South America, was promoted to medical director of Biogenetics this summer. Though he is licensed to practice medicine, even he has not received board certification for his specialty, gynecology.

Those who audition well for Baldoceda practice their techniques by operating solo on unsuspecting patients.

But a 28-year-old nursing student who received an abortion from one of Biogenetics' tryouts this fall said it was clear to her that "the doctor had no idea what he was doing. I was just a guinea pig."

HER ABORTION was part of Cook County Hospital resident Jovenel DuBois' on-the-job training. "The director of the clinic was telling this guy, 'You're supposed to do that, you're supposed to do this. No, that's not the right instrument,'" she said.

"It must have been his first abortion," the patient concluded after DuBois' performance. At 36, the French-schooled DuBois is a third-year resident at the hospital.

"He was picking up the wrong things, dropping the instruments," said DuBois' nervous patient. "I wonder what would happen



'These doctors rarely tell patients their names.'

if he made a mistake. What would happen to the woman?"

Several weeks later, DuBois' "guinea pig" patient was still suffering cramps, passing blood clots and complaining of terrible pain.

"THAT'S TERRIBLE," said Dr. John Fultz,

medical co-ordinator for the Illinois Department of Registration, when asked about the practice of residents auditioning on patients.

"That's just like opening an office and deciding you're going to do surgery and then starting to do it. If you miss, you learn that's

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Abortion as a game of chance



'Some had dead tissue left inside them. Others had massive infections, perforated bowels, or punctured wombs.'

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not the way to do it. It's an outrageous way to operate."

Dr. David Aberman, 31, is a Guadalajara (Mexico) medical school grad. While completing his fourth-year residency at County Hospital, Aberman regularly performs abortions at Biogenetics.

He bragged to undercover investigator Michelle Young that the clinic pays him \$15 for every abortion he performs on a cash customer and \$20 for every public aid recipient. At those rates, a doctor moonlighting once a week can net as much as \$30,000 a year, he said.

Last year the Illinois Department of Public Aid paid \$126,809 for bills submitted in Aberman's name, mostly for abortions at Biogenetics. "This is a good way to make a lot of money easily," Aberman told Young. "But there's a lot of worry if you goof up."

ONE OF ABERMAN's patients told The Sun-Times how he apparently "goofed" on her.

"He didn't say a thing to me when he walked in to do the abortion, except, 'What do we have here? Ah, too much weight!'"

"He gave me no anesthesia, not even a local. I had tears running down my cheeks. And then, right in the middle of performing the abortion, he yelled to the nurse, 'This lady is not pregnant!'"

While abortions on non-pregnant women are not rare at some of the Michigan Av. clinics we investigated, they should be



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Clinic falsely promises only 'board-certified obstetrician-gynecologists'

At Biogenetics Ltd., 520 N. Michigan, new patients are handed slick brochures boasting that only "board-certified" doctors are on its staff. In fact, the clinic—which Clifford Josefik (facing camera) publicly claims to own—has none, according to the records of two medical associ-

ations. Instead, unsuspecting patients are given abortions by "rookie" doctors and general practitioners with little experience in women's medicine. Several lawsuits against these doctors from Biogenetics and three other Michigan Av. clinics are pending.

Medical experts say that where lab tests are accurate and doctors are experienced, unnecessary abortions almost never occur.

Residents like DuBois and Aberman are permitted to moonlight under a contract Cook County Hospital officials signed with their staff last year.

BUT DR. UWE FREESE, head of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Cook County Hospital, is not happy with the arrangement, or with residents performing abortions at privately owned clinics.

"I strongly discourage it, but I have no legal means to stop it," Freese said. "I do not sanction this in any way and I think it is deplorable that these residents are being exploited in this way."

He added, "I think that abortions ought to

'He was picking up the wrong things, dropping the instruments,' said the nervous patient.

be done by experienced physicians who are at least board eligible."

When Aberman's boss, Baldoceda, is not busy auditioning young residents on frightened patients, he occupies himself in other ways.

Investigator Young watched Baldoceda operate on a patient while he was getting a sensual massage from the nurse assisting him.

The patient was lying on her back, legs spread, undergoing an internal examination by Baldoceda, when Young and the nurse entered the room.

"Fancy seeing you here," Baldoceda said to the nurse.

Baldoceda had begun suctioning the patient's uterus when, Young said, "The nurse walked around behind the doctor and began playing with his surgical cap. She moved the cap around, put her hands beneath it and curled clumps of his hair around her fingers. 'She was teasing him, flirting with him,' said Young, 'and in the middle of the operation, she began rubbing his shoulders. He was laughing. The patient was moaning.'"

YOUNG RECALLS seeing the stern-faced Baldoceda laugh only one other time. It was after a noon-hour champagne birthday party for one of the clinic nurses. All three clinic doctors had at least one glass of the bubbly that day, but Baldoceda had more than a few.

According to Dr. Warren Pearse of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, "the dangers to patients are obvious" from doctors who have been drinking two to four glasses of champagne. "You have to be alert in surgery," Pearse said. "There is no such thing as minor surgery. In abortions, your touch must be sensitive."

Baldoceda and Aberman went on to perform more abortions after the celebration. As one patient stumbled out of a procedure room and fainted, Baldoceda began to laugh. "He stood a few feet away, leaning against a pillar, laughing and acting giddy as

the aides struggled to get the woman up," Young said.

But what patients remember most about the doctors at Biogenetics is not their sense of humor. It is the cold, mechanical manner of their method and the steady clip at which they move from patient to patient.

A woman who had an abortion one early August morning recalls lying on the operating table waiting for her doctor—30-year-old Dr. Pankaj Thaker—to get to her. "I could swear that there was only one doctor and he just went down the line giving abortions," said the woman.

"I started crying because I could hear that little [suction] machine going on and going off. He just kept getting closer and closer. I heard his gloves pop off in the next room and then he came to me."

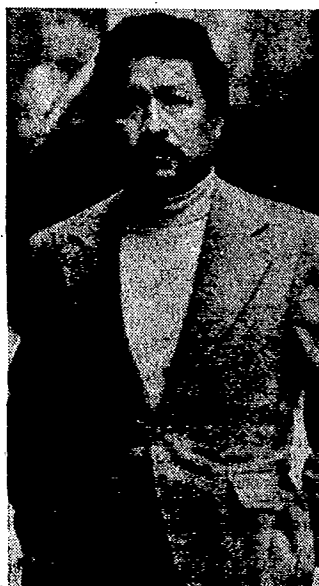
"He didn't say a word. He came in and did it and walked out in three minutes. Then he started down the hall again. . . ."

ANOTHER BIOGENETICS patient said she

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Clinic 'coach' holds 'tryouts'

Dr. Carlos Baldoceda, 33, educated in South America, is medical director of Biogenetics Ltd., 520 N. Michigan, although he has not received board certification for his specialty, gynecology. As medical director, Baldoceda assigns doctors who may have little or no related experience to perform abortions. One fourth-year resident at Cook County Hospital, a graduate of a medical school in Guadalajara, Mexico, bragged to an undercover investigator that the clinic pays him \$15 for every abortion performed on a cash customer, \$20 for a public aid patient—or as much as \$30,000 a year. Baldoceda, when not conducting abortion auditions, takes the field himself—at least once in his street clothes and once after drinking champagne at a clinic party. Another time, he was giving an internal examination while receiving a massage from a nurse. "Fancy seeing you here," Baldoceda, laughing, told the nurse.



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License revoked, but clinic operates

One of the questions posed by The Abortion Profiteers series is how Water Tower Reproductive Center Ltd., 840 N. Michigan, has managed to stay open despite the revocation of the clinic's license on Sept. 25.

When the Department of Public Health revoked the license of the clinic owned by Dr. Arnold Bickham, it assumed the action would mean no more abortions would be performed. But the department did not send an inspector to check and the clinic is still operating.

The department also did not know Bickham had obtained a temporary restraining order on Oct. 23 against the health department's revocation.

On Nov. 3, U.S. District Court Judge John Powers Crowley extended the order until Nov. 24.

And Monday, Bickham filed suit in Circuit Court to have his license restored.

Patient recalls: 'I was just a guinea pig'

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waited five hours to see a doctor. She got Baldoceda. "He just took five minutes. He was very rude and did the abortion so fast, there was no time for the anesthetic to work," the woman recalled. "That's why I think he left that afterbirth inside me."

More than a week later she was still bleeding heavily and suffering from severe cramps. Baldoceda had to rescrrape her uterus to remove the tissue he left behind.

Undercover investigators at both Biogenetics and the Water Tower Reproductive Center, 840 N. Michigan, also saw doctors performing abortions with precious little attention to their own cleanliness, or to their patients' health.

At Biogenetics, Young observed Baldoceda stop short, halfway out the clinic, to come back to do "just one more" abortion.

It was a busy day and the waiting room was still crowded with patients when Baldoceda changed his mind about going home.

He did not, however, change his clothes. "He just took off his coat and walked into a procedure room and started the abortion," Young said. "He didn't bother to take off his street clothes and put on his surgical scrubs."

AT WATER TOWER Reproductive, investigator Mindy Trossman watched clinic owner Dr. Arnold Bickham, 41, leave on at least two occasions, with women still convalescing in the recovery room.

Bickham's departure on those days left the clinic without a physician. Had any of the women in recovery suffered serious complications, Bickham's early departure could have been fatal.

Trossman also saw Bickham rush a patient out of the clinic before her abortion was finished.

Although other doctors later found the woman had suffered a punctured vagina, Bickham sent her home bleeding, saying he would not do an abortion on her because she was 16 weeks pregnant. (By law, clinics may only perform abortions on women up to 12 weeks pregnant.)

Trossman saw the patient minutes after she was ordered off the operating table. She was sitting in a waiting room-chair, moaning and clutching her stomach.



LATER, IN AN interview from her hospital bed, the patient, 19-year-old Anna Guinn of Hammond, Ind., gave this account of what happened:

Guinn said she was being examined by one of Bickham's doctors, Prakash Rattan, when she heard the suction machine go on. "Without giving me any anesthetic, he started up the machine," said Guinn. "I started screaming because it was so painful."

"The doctor said, 'Lean your head back and shut your mouth!' Then, all of a sudden," said Guinn, "he stopped."

"He took the [instruments] out of me and said, 'Stay in this position.' Another doctor [Bickham] came in, stuck his hand up me and said, 'Too far along.'"

"What the hell are you talking about?" yelled Guinn. "It's already half done!"

"Ma'am, we didn't even touch you," said Bickham. "All you had was a pelvic exam."

Guinn said she asked Bickham to call an ambulance for her. "By this time, the cramps

'He just took five minutes. He was very rude and did the abortion so fast, there was no time for the anesthetic to work. That's why I think he left that afterbirth inside me.'

were unbearable. The whole examining table was covered with blood," she said.

But Bickham, according to Guinn, ignored her request. "He said, 'You don't need an ambulance. . . . Get up and get dressed.'"

EVEN WHEN Guinn's mother asked Bickham about what happened in the operating room, Bickham would say only that Anna was too pregnant to get an abortion at his clinic. The mother said he never once hinted that her daughter might need emergency treatment.

So Guinn was driven back to Hammond. But by early evening, she looked so pale and was in such pain that a friend took her to a hospital. That night, she underwent emergency surgery at Michael Reese Hospital to repair what doctors there diagnosed as a vaginal perforation and an incomplete abortion.

Although Bickham had thrown Guinn out of the clinic because, as he noted on her chart, she was "16 weeks pregnant," doctors at Reese determined Guinn was only six to eight weeks pregnant.

Bickham is one of the few board-certified doctors practicing in Michigan Av. abortion clinics. When he is in the clinic, he often rushes from patient to patient. Sometimes he rushes from abortion to abortion without washing his hands between patients or donning sterile gloves.

"That is a terribly dangerous way to spread infection from one patient to another," said Fultz, when asked about methods such as Bickham's. "It is impossible [during an abortion] for his hands never to touch the patient."

The Biogenetics clinic boasts a staff of "all board-certified physicians" in its brochure. According to records of two medical associations, it has none.

But Biogenetics does have a woman not licensed to practice medicine who calls herself a doctor.

Our investigator fielded a call from an an-

'He gave me no anesthesia, not even a local. I had tears running down my cheeks. And then, he yelled, 'This lady is not pregnant!'



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Aborting and abortion

Anna Guinn, 19, of Hammond, Ind., underwent emergency surgery for a perforated vagina, diagnosed by doctors at Michael Reese Hospital as resulting from an incomplete abortion. Earlier in the day, she had been sent home, bleeding and suffering cramps, from Water Tower Reproductive Center, 840 N. Michigan, where Dr. Arnold Bickham told her she was too pregnant—16 weeks—for an abortion. (State law permits clinics to perform abortions only up to 12 weeks.) Bickham made his assessment after having already started the abortion, she said. However, Bickham told Guinn, "Ma'am, we didn't even touch you. All you had was a pelvic exam." Doctors at Michael Reese later determined she was six to eight weeks pregnant.

gry patient complaining about the "Dr." Shastia Khan—the "woman doctor" who gave her a \$20 postoperative exam. "She said I was fine," the patient complained, "but my own physician said I had all sorts of complications. I had missed tissue."

While "Dr." Khan's duties generally are limited to performing postoperative exams and dispensing contraceptives, she also inserts intrauterine devices and prescribes drugs using another doctor's name. The clinic apparently bills Public Aid for her services to welfare patients under other doctors' names, according to some bills seen by investigators.

On at least one occasion, Khan had to ask our undercover aide for advice on what sort of contraceptive to give a woman experiencing complications from birth control pills.

But the clinic gives Khan pads full of forms prescribed by "Dr. P. Thaker" so she can write prescriptions for birth control pills and other medications.

"That's a dangerous and unprofessional practice," said Fultz, whose agency licenses doctors. Fultz said the Medical Practices Act forbids a physician, in this case Thaker, to lend his name to another person unlicensed to treat a patient.

Doctors signing patient charts for other doctors is also dangerous, unprofessional and illegal, medical experts say.

At the Water Tower Reproductive Center, patient charts are, almost without exception, signed by one doctor—Bickham, the clinic owner. While Bickham does his share of abortions at the busy clinic, other doctors perform many procedures there as well.

According to Fultz, doctors signing records for other doctors is "specifically prohibited in the Medical Practices Act."

At the Michigan Avenue Medical Center, 30 S. Michigan, Dr. Norberto Agustin also takes unprofessional liberties with patient charts.

Rushing between abortions, Agustin occasionally doesn't even have time to wait for anesthetics to take effect, much less do his record keeping.

Agustin, 41, went to medical school in Manila. He is a general practitioner who at one time did abortions for \$15 each at Biogenetics.

AT MICHIGAN AVENUE Medical Center, an undercover investigator working as a nurse's aide pointed out to Agustin that he had failed to note on a patient's chart any details of the abortion he'd performed hours before.

Agustin sat down and called up the figures from "memory"—including the size of the uterine cavity and amount of tissue removed.

On two other occasions, investigator Julianne Felkner saw Agustin write on patient

'Rushing between abortions, Agustin occasionally doesn't even have time to wait for anesthetics to take effect, much less do his record keeping.'

charts that he had removed about 200 cc. of tissue and blood, when, in fact, he had removed three times that much.

But, according to Medicaid officials, Agustin's problems with record keeping are not limited to his abortion practice.

Before suspending Agustin from the Medicaid program last year, state authorities found he had ordered as many as 21 different lab tests for patients whose charts included no diagnosis or evidence of any physical examination. Public Aid investigators charged Agustin altered the records after their initial review in an attempt to correct the deficiencies.

NEXT: The aftermath of Dr. Hal-

A note to our readers

A five-month investigation by The Sun-Times and the Better Government Assn. has disclosed fraud and other abuses in some referral agencies and clinics providing abortion services in Chicago.

These findings are documented in the accompanying stories and others to follow. The Sun-Times series also will report on clinics and hospitals where safe and compassionate medical care for women is available.

But this newspaper has decided that it cannot determine safe and sanitary conditions at all the abortion counseling services and clinics that advertised in our classified pages. Thus we are ceasing publication of such advertisements at this time.

Reliable abortion counseling should be obtainable from family physicians. Other organizations that are prepared to respond to women's health questions are:

• Planned Parenthood Assn., 55 E. Jackson, 322-4240.

• Health Evaluation Referral Service, 2757 N. Seminary, 248-0166.