

Original article found online at: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/queens/queens-gynecologist-hit-manslaughter-charges-article-1.2826925>

Queens gynecologist arrested for manslaughter three months after woman bled to death after abortion



Dr. Robert Rho seen in Queens Criminal Court Tuesday afternoon.

[\(Todd Maisel/New York Daily News\)](#)

BY [Graham Rayman](#)

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Updated: Tuesday, October 11, 2016, 11:09 PM

A Queens gynecologist has been charged with manslaughter three months after a 30-year-old woman died from a botched abortion, officials said.

Dr. Robert Rho, a specialist in vaginal rejuvenation, is accused of nicking the cervix of Jamie Lee Morales of Buffalo, who later bled to death.

Rho's defense lawyer at his Tuesday arraignment in Queens argued that his client had no criminal liability in the death.

"There is no question there is a tragic occurrence here, but it wasn't criminal," said lawyer Jeffrey Lichtman. "Of course I think he's innocent."

[Thousands of doctors discovered in sex abuse scandal](#)

Prosecutors said Morales, using the name Thaycha Ruiz, went with her sister to the Liberty Women's health clinic on Main St. in Flushing on July 9 to have a second-trimester abortion.

During the surgery, Rho allegedly hit her cervix, damaged her vaginal wall, and opened a cut in an artery that goes through the uterus.

In the recovery room, Morales noticed she was still bleeding vaginally, prosecutor Brad Leventhal said. She had lost a large amount of blood and needed a second operation.

Once that operation was over, she was told to go to the hospital if the bleeding started again. She was allowed to leave — even though she appeared off-kilter and had collapsed at least once. As she was driven to her sister's Bronx home, she lost consciousness.

Morales was taken to a Bronx hospital, where she was given six units of blood but died that night.

Rho, 53, of Lake Success, L.I., faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted. In addition to allegedly botching the procedure, he is accused of failing to take care of her afterward.



Jamie Lee (pictured) died after Dr. Robert Rho allegedly botched an abortion procedure.

(Facebook)

The fetus was recovered from a black garbage bag outside the clinic door.

Lichtman said that he could understand charges if Rho had a history of botched operations. But, he said, Morales' death was the first in thousands of Rho procedures.

“There was nothing that was particularly different about this case,” Lichtman said.

“This is a highly trained, highly experienced doctor who handles difficult abortions. I think this is a civil matter.”

He said he could not recall a similar criminal case in about two decades.

“There’s a reason why decades have gone without anybody being charged with homicide in an abortion case in New York,” Lichtman said.

“Prosecutors have realized that there is some risk to these procedures, and sometimes unforeseen complications can occur, and sadly, women die on rare occasion.”

Queens Supreme Court Justice Gregory Lasak ordered Rho released on \$400,000 bail. He had to surrender his passport and not engage in medical practice until the case is over. He is slated to return to court Nov. 15.

In 2011, Rho was cleared of sexual harassment charges filed by a former receptionist who claimed he plied her with a dinner and free liposuction. A six-person jury rejected 23-year-old Jiyeon Byun’s claims in less than a day.