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METRO NEWS BRIEFS: NEW YORK; Abortion Foe Refuses To Renew Doctor's Lease

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS APRIL 3, 1999

A landlord has refused to renew the lease of a suburban Rochester doctor who performs abortions.

Dr. Morris Wortman, an obstetrician-gynecologist who is a frequent target of protests, must leave an office complex in suburban Brighton when his lease runs out June 30. He has had an office there since 1986.

"His abortion activity is something that I cannot support, and it's also bad business to have an abortionist as a tenant," said Norman Leenhouts, chairman of Home Leasing Inc., the landlord. The company's 20 partners backed his decision, he added.

Mr. Leenhouts said he did not know that Dr. Wortman performed abortions when when they signed a new lease agreement in 1989. "It was not something I focused on -- I didn't think to ask," Mr. Leenhouts said.

But Dr. Wortman contested that, saying: "He certainly knew. How could you not know about it? The demonstrations were on all the news channels."

Dr. Wortman gained national attention when he wrote an essay in Newsweek magazine shortly after the fatal shooting last October of Dr. Barnett Slepian, who performed abortions in the Buffalo suburb of Amherst.