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Abortion physician guilty of sex abuse

Valley doctor faces up to 75 years in prison

Carol Sowers and Judi Villa

The Arizona Republic

Dec. 3, 2003 12:00 AM

Dr. Brian Finkel, the outspoken gun-toting Phoenix abortion doctor, was convicted Tuesday on 22 counts of sexually abusing patients over the past 17 years.

Finkel, 54, was found not guilty on 34 more counts, including six of the more serious charges of sexual assault.

The jury, which heard three months of testimony, couldn't reach a verdict on four sex-abuse charges. Prosecutors said they likely won't be retried.

"We got you," Ebene Jordan, 24, of Gilbert, said after the verdicts were read.

Finkel was found not guilty of sexually abusing Jordan when she was a patient. But she said she was satisfied with the verdicts because they were enough to imprison the once high-profile abortion doctor.

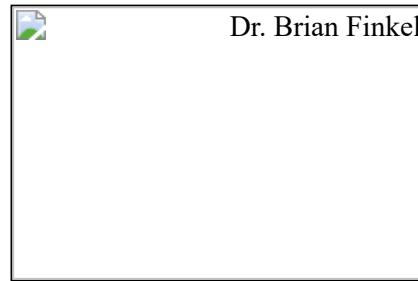
Victims in the packed courtroom applauded as Finkel was led away by sheriff's deputies.

"We were trying to put a scumbag behind bars," Jordan said. "I feel great."

Taken to Maricopa County jail to await sentencing, the usually talkative Finkel refused requests to be interviewed.

Jurors also refused to comment, so it was unclear why they convicted Finkel on some charges but not others.

Cindi Nannetti, one of two deputy county attorneys who prosecuted Finkel, said it was a difficult case because jurors



Dr. Brian Finkel

Jack Kurtz/The Arizona Republic

Dr. Brian Finkel looks at his accusers Tuesday as the verdicts are read. He was convicted of 22 counts.

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had to decide whether Finkel's touching was out of bounds or part of a normal medical exam. Some of the cases were also years old.

"I expected a mixed verdict," Nannetti said.

Before the verdict, Finkel turned to the first row of the courtroom, where his family and friends were seated, and flashed the peace sign and a thumbs up.

Richard Gierloff, Finkel's attorney, said he will appeal the verdicts on the grounds that the cases should have been tried separately.

Gierloff said that he was surprised by the verdicts on some of the individual counts but pleased that Finkel was convicted on less than one-third of the original counts against him.

A few counts were thrown out during the trial.

"We were very confident that we'd do very well in this trial, and I think we did," Gierloff said.

He added, "The state's strategy in this case was to overwhelm with the sheer number of counts, and that strategy failed."

Finkel, who performed more than 30,000 abortions over the past 20 years, had become a national figure in the 1990s. He often appeared on network talk shows to denounce the growing violence among abortion protesters.

A beaming Maricopa County Attorney Rick Romley praised Finkel's 32 accusers for having the courage to tell their stories of sexual abuse in Finkel's abortion clinic.

"A doctor who had abused the trust of his patients by sexually abusing them will no longer do that again," Romley said.

During Finkel's three-month trial, a parade of victims told of sexual abuse that included twisting their nipples, kissing them or fondling them inappropriately during exams.

The sexual assault charges of which Finkel was acquitted involved allegations of digital penetration.

Finkel could spend a maximum of 75 years behind bars. Sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 2 before Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Cates.

"We're thrilled even though some of the counts came back as not guilty," said Janet Jorgensen of Phoenix, who accused Finkel of sexually abusing her 15 years ago. "We're just thrilled it's over with and he's going to jail."

Finkel was found not guilty of all charges involving Jorgensen, but she said she was happy for the women who

got guilty verdicts.

"I think most victims went into this for one thing: That he never hurt another woman," she said.

Jorgensen said she feels bad for Finkel's family and has no malice for him.

"I pray for his salvation," Jorgensen said. "I pray he will find his way to understand what he did because I don't think he does."

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