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Clarence J. Washington

Mary Ann Dancy

Clinic, doctor sued in death Woman's family cites abortion

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Article Text:

RALEIGH -- The family of an Enfield woman is suing a former Raleigh clinic and a **doctor**, saying the woman bled to death after a botched **abortion** two years ago.

In a suit filed in Wake County Superior Court, the family of Mary Ann Dancy says a **doctor** at the former Fleming Center lacerated the woman's cervix during a procedure, then refused to return telephone calls later in the evening. Dancy was 32.

The Fleming Center on Hayworth Street in North Raleigh was the city's first clinic that performed **abortions**.

Its founder, Dr. Paul Fleming, died in 1989, and the building was sold in 1991 to the Raleigh Women's Health Organization Inc., which still retains its records but is not affiliated with the former practice.

Dr. Clarence J. Washington, the **doctor** named in the suit, now works at Carolina Women's Clinic in Fayetteville. Washington, 45, could not be reached for comment Tuesday. Bob Monroe, a Raleigh lawyer who has represented Washington in the past, said he was unfamiliar with the suit and declined to comment.

According to statistics compiled by the National **Abortion** Federation, a Washington-based professional association of **abortion** providers, one in 200,000 women who have legal **abortions** die.

"There are **doctors** who do **abortions** who don't do them as well as they should, just as there are **doctors** doing tonsillectomies who don't do them as well as they should," said Barbara Radford, executive director of the federation.

Mary Ann Dancy's sister, Carolyn, who lives in Rocky Mount and filed the suit, said she, her sister and a male friend went to the Raleigh clinic July 27, 1990. Carolyn Dancy said the **abortion** was performed about 4 p.m.

"She seemed all right, she walked to the car," she said. Her sister had what she considered normal bleeding after the **abortion**. When she got home, she took a bath and went up to her bedroom, but her condition worsened.

Mary Ann Dancy was taken to Halifax Memorial Hospital, where she died after surgery shortly before midnight, Carolyn Dancy said.

An autopsy showed that Dancy died because of a "cervical laceration," the suit says. At the time of her death, she was the mother of five children, who ranged in age from two to 17.

Raleigh attorney Michael Anderson, who has taken over the suit, declined comment on it Tuesday, but confirmed that a previous attorney had been disbarred and said the statute of limitations on such a case is two years after the death.

Radford, of the **Abortion** Federation, said such injuries during an **abortion** are "not that unusual," largely because it's a blind procedure.

"It's essentially done by feel," she said. In most cases, she said, the injuries are not fatal, but heal by themselves or are corrected by surgery.

Washington, a 1974 graduate of the University of Michigan Medical School, was licensed with a specialty in gynecology in North Carolina in 1988. His license has never been suspended, revoked or placed on probationary status, said Ann Norris, a spokesman for the N.C. Board of Medical Examiners.

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