



NEWS

ABORT-CLINIC DEATHS DIDN'T NIX HIS CAREER

By Susan Rubinowitz

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In the 1970s, Dr. Moshe Hachamovitch was fast erecting an empire of abortion clinics, branching out from one in The Bronx and two on Long Island to facilities in Arizona and Texas.

But it all came crashing down in April 1998, when 33-year-old Lou Anne Herron died at Hachamovitch's A-Z Women's Center in Phoenix.

Herron suffered a ruptured uterus during a late-term abortion performed by one of Hachamovitch's employees, Dr. John Biskind. Police said the woman had been lying on blood-soaked sheets for some time when they arrived.

Hachamovitch, who lives in Scarsdale, wasn't on the premises, but workers told detectives he had stressed the bottom line, pressing staffers to focus on volume instead of the niceties of care.

But so far, Hachamovitch has had little to worry about from New York state health officials, who've often let doctors with troubling records resume practicing medicine.

Although the Health Department has cited him for "gross negligence" and "gross incompetence," Hachamovitch got no more than a nine-month suspension of his license.

At his Phoenix clinic, Hachamovitch certainly knew how things should be done. He had trained as an obstetrician-gynecologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in The Bronx.

Biskind and the A-Z Women's Center's clinical administrator, Carol Stuart, were charged with manslaughter last year, and Hachamovitch has been named along with Biskind in a malpractice suit brought by Herron's family. Both cases are still pending.

"The basis of our complaint is his putting people in positions of making medical decisions, and they had no medical background," said the Herron family's lawyer, Paul Lazarus. "The supervisor was untrained — she was a marketing expert. She knew nothing about medicine."

He said Herron's relatives could not comment on the lawsuit.

But her death isn't Hachamovitch's only headache. Deaths at his clinics of five other women — two of them Hachamovitch's own patients — are under investigation in all states where he did business.

And he's the subject of a criminal probe by the Maricopa County Attorney in Phoenix, that office said.

The New York state Health Department wanted to revoke Hachamovitch's license, but the state's Board for Professional Medical Conduct — after hearing from Hachamovitch's lawyer — knocked it down to the nine-month suspension, said Health Department spokeswoman Kristine Smith.

Hachamovitch isn't running his New York clinics during his suspension, said his lawyer Tony Scher.

He said of Biskind, "My view is he should be found not guilty in the case.

"We said he did nothing wrong. Unfortunately, the patient died, and unfortunately, if you do enough cases, things happen," Scher said.

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At Hachamovitch's clinic on Eastchester Road in The Bronx, a receptionist said it was possible to make an appointment with him, but that he was "on an extended vacation."

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