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STORY · Published March 19, 2008 · Last Update January 14, 2015

Abortion Clinics Investigated for Dumping Waste and Patient Records

By | [Fox News](#)

Police and environmental officials are investigating the improper disposal of medical waste and patient records at a suburban Detroit abortion clinic after an anti-abortion group found human tissue and the documents in a Dumpster behind the facility.

Acting on a tip from Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, authorities discovered improperly disposed of medical waste and records on March 10 in the trash behind Womancare, an abortion clinic in Lathrup Village, Mich.

Officials also searched waste and records that group members took from the facility last month and stored at the home of the group's director.

"Some demonstrators chose to take it upon themselves and look in a Dumpster for that clinic," Lathrup Village Police Chief Robert Jones said. "And they discovered that there was pathological remains in there and other debris that you might be able to imagine on your own from a clinic — you know, like blood-soaked gauze, needles and things like that."

Officials also searched a Womancare facility in Sterling Heights, Mich., on March 10. The following day, investigators found medical waste on the pavement across a five-lane street from the Lathrup

Village clinic.

Womancare is a chain of six clinics operated by Dr. Abraham Alberto Hodari, a frequent target of anti-abortion protesters in southeastern Michigan who refer to his facilities as "abortion mills" and have claimed he's performed the procedures on underage girls without parental consent.

Monica Miller, director of Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, said she urged demonstrators — who had begun a 40-day prayer vigil outside the clinic — to dig through the trash last month. She said she stored what was found in her garage until authorities could investigate.

"Initially, they did not discover any remains of aborted babies," Miller said. "And I consulted with them and I suggested they should start taking more trash bags out because they weren't getting a large enough sample."

In Michigan, pathological waste — human organs, tissue, body parts other than teeth, products of conception and fluids removed by trauma or during surgery or autopsy — may be legally disposed by incineration, grinding to a pulp, as well as cemetery or landfill burial, provided the waste is stored in a closed, puncture-resistant container.

Robert McCann, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, said the law is clear as to how to dispose of medical waste.

"By and large, any kind of medical facility in Michigan understands the importance of following the law," McCann said. "There are a number of medical-waste haulers around the state that contract with these facilities and make sure that everything is being handled properly, the waste streams are being separated and all of the medical waste is going to the appropriate place."

Miller turned patient files over to police, but she made copies of "representative samples of what was found in the trash" and allowed a reporter to peruse the records in her home. At least one document has been posted on the Web site of an anti-abortion activist.

"By now we have between 200 and 300 patient records with very detailed, identifying information on them about the patients and the biohazardous waste that was also being discarded in the trash Dumpsters behind the clinic," Miller said.

Under federal patient privacy rules, doctors must have reasonable safeguards in place to prevent the misuse or wrongful disclosure of health information. Throwing unshredded medical documents into a Dumpster is not considered a reasonable safeguard, a federal official said.

Hodari did not return a request for comment, but he told the Detroit News that the disposal of records and waste was an error. "They had a new employee," Hodari told the paper for a March 11 article.

On Tuesday, Hodari showed the Detroit Free Press new shredders and biohazard trash cans for the Lathrup Village facility's eight exam rooms.

According to the Womancare Web site, the agency takes "the privacy of your health information seriously."

In addition to the records, Miller's group posted video and photographs of the items found last month, including bloody gauze, syringes and what they say are parts of 18 aborted fetuses.

[Click here for the Citizens for a Pro-Life Society Web site.](#)

The department is still investigating whether the clinic may face charges. Under Michigan environmental laws, the clinic could face fines of \$2,500 for each violation plus \$1,000 per day for each day the violation continues.

There have been no previous complaints about Womancare, McCann said.

This is not the first time Hodari has been the target of anti-abortion activists. In Nov. 2007, a Web site posted a lecture he gave to Wayne State University medical students in which he said that "sometimes you need to lie to a patient about things that they want to do or know." He made the comments while discussing how he kept men out of the procedure room because one had tried to sue.

"We're kind of keeping a, shall we say, an open file on him and watching him in that respect," Miller said.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the national association for OB/GYNs of which Hodari is a senior fellow, did not return calls for comment on the improper-disposal allegations.

Miller said the fetuses her group obtained have been taken to a funeral home for burial.

Officials advised against individuals digging through medical waste. The Womancare Dumpsters are on private property, and the Lathrup Village Police Department obtained a warrant to search them, Jones said.

[Click here for Hodari's comments to the Detroit Free Press.](#)

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