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Abortionist Tommy Swate's Unsavory Career

Dr. Tommy E. Swate plied his trade in abortion in Texas and Louisiana, with unpleasant results. Swate's license was suspended and he was placed on probation for five years 1992 due to professional failure to practice medicine in an acceptable manner and repeated meritorious health-care liability claims, including pleading no contest to allegations of 14 botched abortions.

A patient I'll call "Gloria" alleged that she had an abortion performed by Swate April 4, 1987. During a subsequent visit, Swate did an ultrasound, and told Gloria he had to suction out blood clots from her abdomen. The next morning at 2 AM, moaning from pain, Gloria expelled a fetal head. When she was unable to find an attorney to file her case, Gloria called Swate, wanting to return the fetal head to him and get a refund, whereupon she said Swate threatened to have her arrested.

A patient I'll call "Cris," age 19, alleged that she had an abortion by Swate at Gulf Coast Women's Center, Pasadena, Texas, on July 19, 1985. She was admitted to Humana Hospital with complications which persisted after her release. Cris sought a consult from another physician, who informed her that she was probably sterile due to improper treatment.

A patient I'll call "Bernice" filed suit against Swate, alleging she hemorrhaged and expelled a dead fetus two days after 1985 abortion by Swate. Another patient, "Shelli" sued Swate, alleging that she had an abortion at 16 weeks performed by Swate August 16, 1985. Shelli fell ill two days later and was admitted to hospital for removal of the dead fetus. Yet another patient, "Marsha," sued, claiming severe pain and illness following a September 24, 1984 abortion by Swate. Marsha then went to West Loop Clinic, "where doctors found an 'unborn fetus in an abnormal position.'" Marsha claims she is injured for life.

A woman asking to be identified only as Marilyn made accusations against Swate. She said that ten years earlier, had gone to Swate with pregnancy complications. Swate told her fetus would be retarded. Marilyn had a retarded child already, whom she loved, and asked Swate to save her unborn baby. Swate told her that he could not, and instead performed an abortion, perforating Marilyn's uterus and small intestines. Marilyn required a hysterectomy, but her attorney dropped the case.

Swate didn't just do abortions. He also ran some methadone clinics in Texas, which were forcibly closed due to allegations of the following violations of state and federal methadone laws:

- Failure to properly document addiction before administering methadone
- Failure to restrict patients who test positive for illicit drugs or negative for methadone
- Inadequate oversight of patients' doses
- Allowing patients to pick up doses for other patients
- Allowing an undercover agent to obtain methadone.

Abandoned methadone patient files were found in Swate's house. At least three clients died of apparent methadone-related deaths.

Swate also ran into other troubles. In March 1980, Swate sued a hospital nurse for supposedly describing him as 'not the best doctor' who was 'known for delivering babies too soon and famous for inducing labor.'"

Swate was charged with assault of a female investigator posing as patient in order to serve a subpoena on Swate. He had evidently evaded a previous subpoena by outrunning the server.

Swate was banned from practicing at Humana Hospital after two doctors implicated him in injuring at least 23 abortion patients. Swate then allegedly threatened to assault doctor who implicated him. Swate sued to try to regain his privileges with an injunction. His petition was denied.

Sources: Pasadena Citizen 5-9-86, 8-14-87; Houston Post 6-6-86, 7-25-86; Hardin County News 10-7-92; Houston Chronicle 6-6-86, 7-1-86, 5-15-91, 11-13-92; Harris County District Court Case No. 86-20421

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