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Doctor Faces Accusation of Botching an Abortion : Medicine: State medical board says the Sun Valley physician attempted procedure too late in the pregnancy.

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TIMES STAFF WRITER

State medical investigators have charged a Sun Valley physician with botching an abortion on a 19-year-old woman whose baby later was delivered alive by emergency Cesarean section but died in two days.

Dr. Kim Beauchamp failed to take the woman's medical history, give her anesthesia or determine the age of the fetus before he started the procedure at Clinica Femenina, a now-closed abortion clinic in Downtown Los Angeles, according to a complaint by the Medical Board of California.

Within moments of beginning the abortion, the complaint alleges, Beauchamp told an assistant the fetus was "too big" and began bumping his head against a wall as he exclaimed, "Oh my God, what have I done?"

Beauchamp, 58, who has an office in Panorama City, could not be reached for comment. He has been licensed to practice in California since 1971 and has never before been the target of disciplinary proceedings.

The medical board, which disciplines doctors and other health care workers, said Beauchamp's actions constituted "an extreme departure" from proper medical care and that his physician's license should be revoked or suspended as a result of the 1992 incident.

"He left the patient far worse off than she was in the beginning," said state Deputy Atty. Gen. Karen B. Chappelle, who is handling the case against Beauchamp on behalf of the board.

Citing confidentiality rules, state officials did not identify the patient.

Investigators said the woman went to Clinica Femenina on Oct. 24, 1992, thinking she might be pregnant. She was unsure because she was still menstruating and had not gained any weight.

After performing a vaginal examination, Beauchamp said, "It is small enough to do," the complaint said. He did no further examination and did not order an ultrasound or sonogram to determine the extent of the woman's pregnancy, the board alleged.

Beauchamp immediately started the abortion, without giving the woman any anesthesia, according to the complaint. She saw blood going into the tube of the suction device. As he worked, Beauchamp discussed "personal matters" with a female assistant, according to the complaint.

Within moments, the patient heard Beauchamp say, "It's too big." He then began bumping his head against the wall.

The doctor told the woman he had not done anything to her and that her fetus was too large to terminate, according to the complaint. He said she should take Tylenol if she felt any pain.

The woman then was told to "hurry up and get dressed," and was pushed out of the clinic into the hall before she had finished tying her shoes, investigators said. Her mother was given the \$210 she had paid for the abortion and was told nothing had been done to her daughter.

The woman later began experiencing "extreme pain," investigators said. She was taken to Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center where doctors performed an emergency Cesarean section and delivered a live baby girl.

But the mother's placenta had been damaged and the newborn was "in such a state" that she was transferred to Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital in Inglewood, where she died two days later, the complaint said.

Investigators alleged Beauchamp was guilty of negligence and incompetence because he failed to order any tests to determine the fetus' gestational age, take the patient's medical history, administer anesthesia, perform a physical exam or evaluate her uterus.

Kathleen Schmidt, a supervising investigator for the medical board, said Beauchamp began the abortion, realized the fetus was "too far along" and stopped. He later told investigators the patient had experienced premature labor and denied he had tried to abort the fetus, which was 25 to 26 weeks old, said Schmidt.

“Most doctors--that is, legitimate ones--would not do [an abortion] beyond 20 weeks,” she said. “There’s no law that prohibits it, but generally the standard of care is under 20 weeks.”

Beauchamp received a flat fee of \$50 per abortion at the clinic, investigators said, and commonly treated women enrolled in Medi-Cal, the state’s health insurance program for the needy. The physician performs about two to four abortions per day, the complaint said.



judge. No hearing date has yet been set, said Chappelle.

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