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Patient sues Planned Parenthood

GREG TUTTLE Of The Gazette Staff
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A woman has filed a lawsuit against Intermountain Planned Parenthood Inc. of Billings and a local physician, claiming she was injured during an abortion procedure two years ago.

Lorraine Thul's lawsuit said Dr. David G. Healow was negligent and the clinic departed from acceptable standards of medical care. Thul is seeking unspecified damages for pain and suffering and reimbursement for \$50,000 in medical bills and future medical costs.

The lawsuit was filed March 10 in Yellowstone County District Court by Helena attorney John Doubek.

Intermountain Planned Parenthood CEO Stacy James said Friday she had not been served with the lawsuit and could not comment. Doubek did not return a telephone message left at his office.

According to the lawsuit, Thul went to the clinic on May 2, 2002, for an abortion "for possible congenital anomalies secondary to medication taken earlier in pregnancy." Thul said she did not speak directly with the physician before the procedure, and during the procedure a nurse said that Dr. Healow was being "overzealous."

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Thul was discharged from the clinic to her motel room, according to the lawsuit, with instructions to return in two days for a checkup. Thul said she was in pain immediately after the procedure, which grew steadily worse. By 7 p.m. that evening, Thul was having "tremendous cramping and bloating and decided that she needed to call the facility and report the bleeding and pain," the lawsuit states.

At about 11:20 p.m., a clinic employee performed an ultrasound and called Dr. Healow, who arrived 10 or 15 minutes later, the lawsuit states.

"At that time and for the first time Dr. Healow told Plaintiff that he had perforated her uterus but simply did not think that he had perforated the uterus too much," the lawsuit states. "He vacillated as to what to do and 15 minutes later decided to call the local hospital."

Thul had emergency surgery at Deaconess Billings Clinic, her lawsuit states, and has needed subsequent surgeries.

Thul alleges that Dr. Healow "deviated from the standard of care" by perforating the woman's uterus and not discussing potential complications from the medical procedure before surgery. The physician also failed to tell Thul that he was certified as an anesthesiologist and not a surgeon, the lawsuit states.

"While he may have performed surgeries of this kind, Plaintiff would never have agreed to allow Dr. Healow to perform this procedure if she had known he was not a surgeon or an obstetrician/gynecologist," the lawsuit states.

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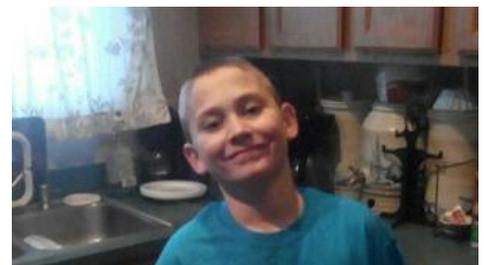
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