



---

## Peoria abortion clinic inspection reveals violations

**By Pam Adams**

Posted Jan 26, 2012 at 12:01 AM

Updated Jan 26, 2012 at 5:39 AM

While two ladies with a baby in a stroller stood outside the building praying Wednesday, Margaret Van Duyn was inside National Health Care Services, pulling out notebook after notebook, thick loose-leaf binders with titles like “OSHA Regulations,” “Tissue Report” and “Post-Abortion Callback.” Combined, the notebooks represent the thousands of pages state health inspectors pored over one day last June when Peoria’s only abortion clinic underwent its first health and safety inspection in more than a decade.

While two ladies with a baby in a stroller stood outside the building praying Wednesday, Margaret Van Duyn was inside National Health Care Services, pulling out notebook after notebook, thick loose-leaf binders with titles like “OSHA Regulations,” “Tissue Report” and “Post-Abortion Callback.”

Combined, the notebooks represent the thousands of pages state health inspectors pored over one day last June when Peoria’s only abortion clinic underwent its first health and safety inspection in more than a decade.

Inspectors uncovered dozens of violations, many of them related to documentation and record-keeping, though an Illinois Department of Public Health spokeswoman described several as “serious.” All of the local clinic’s problems were corrected by October.

Van Duyn, the clinic’s director for most of its 38-year history, was anxious to explain her view of the inspection process, and even more eager to explain that violations listed in the Peoria clinic’s inspection were not nearly as serious as those that led to the closure of two Illinois abortion clinics recently. Nothing in Illinois rose to the level of the “house of horrors” discovered at a Philadelphia clinic, which led Illinois officials to examine the state’s abortion clinics for the first time in years.

Van Duyn estimates the clinic’s last inspection was about 15 years ago when it moved to its current location along North University Street. National Health Care Services had never had a major violation in previous inspections, she said. “So, for me, it was kind of a big deal to get a plan of correction that was so involved.”

IDPH staff reviewed the state’s nine abortion clinics, or pregnancy termination centers, a category limited to first-trimester abortions, last May and June.

Inspectors found violations serious enough to suspend the licenses of Northern Illinois Women’s Center in Rockford and the Women’s Aid Clinic in Lincolnwood. Both operators opted to close rather than pay hefty fines, make the changes required or fight the state’s results in court.

The Peoria clinic had the most violations of the remaining seven clinics, said Melaney Arnold, spokeswoman for IDPH.

“The other six had minor deficiencies, maybe a page or two, compared to Peoria’s 22 pages of deficiencies,” Arnold said. IDPH inspectors also made two return visits to the Peoria clinic, which was not necessary at the others. But the Peoria clinic’s problems were “clearly” not as serious as the two clinics that closed voluntarily, Arnold added.

Since the inspection, National Health Services has instituted a number of changes, including rewriting charts to indicate physicians reviewed patient medical histories and physical exams; renewing and updating files on physicians' credentials and hospital privileges; and training or re-training staff on pre- and post-operative emergency procedures. Additionally, licensed practical nurses will no longer administer intravenous medications and no LPNs or registered nurses will perform duties beyond their scope of practice. A maintenance log has been established to document regular equipment sterilization and all medications and narcotics will be locked away at all times.

The clinic spent about \$10,000 to meet requirements of a separate architectural inspection. Almost \$4,000 of the amount went to replacing wooden doors of two storage rooms with fireproof doors, Van Duyn said.

She disagreed with some of the more serious findings in the inspection and laid out her objections in her response to the state report. But she also sympathized with the two nurse inspectors who observed and interviewed her and her staff for the inspection.

"To ask two women to come in and do all this is just too much," she said, waving a hand at the shelves of policies and procedures inspectors read.

IDPH, like many other states, made inspecting abortion clinics a priority after Philadelphia authorities filed murder charges against the operator of an abortion clinic that had not been inspected for years. Dr. Kermit Gosnell was charged with eight counts of murder, including seven infants allegedly killed after birth by cutting their spinal cords with scissors.

Despite the lack of inspections in Illinois until recently, Van Duyn said it's important for the state to inspect abortion clinics.

“When you have some of the issues these clinics have had, they need to be corrected. And if they’re not, the Department of Public Health needs to do what they need to do.”

With only 24 nurse/inspectors, however, it’s nearly impossible for IDPH to inspect more than 2,000 health care facilities on a regular basis.

Still, Van Duyn was surprised the clinic went without an inspection for something like 15 years. “We always expected them, but they didn’t show up.”

Pam Adams can be reached at 686-3245 or [padams@pjstar.com](mailto:padams@pjstar.com).