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Protesters hit home of Hoag doctor who opposed abortion ban



Outside Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach last week, demonstrators gathered to voice their opinions about the hospital's decision to halt elective abortions. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

By LAUREN WILLIAMS AND JILL COWAN

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12 AM



About 50 to 100 antiabortion protesters wrote messages in chalk and shouted slurs outside the home of a Newport Beach obstetrician who was one of the doctors to oppose [Hoag Hospital's decision](#) to eliminate elective abortions.

The protest late Thursday outside the Dover Shores home of Dr. Richard Agnew, a Hoag Hospital-affiliated physician, was led by a group of protesters who mostly appeared to be in their early teens and wrote messages in chalk that

included “neighborhood serial killer” and “This house was built from blood.”



Paula Durnian, a longtime neighbor, said she found the protest to be “really out of line.”

“I’m a firm believer in freedom of speech, but this was a disturbance of the peace,” she said. “We had to clean the street because they chalked the most horrific things.”

Katharine Agnew, the doctor’s wife, called the demonstration “very disturbing.”

Hoag halted elective abortions shortly after forming a partnership with Catholic health provider St. Joseph Health System. Hoag said the decision was based on low demand for such abortions and that the hospital had performed fewer than 100 a year.

But records and interviews show the decision was closely tied to the Newport Beach hospital’s partnership with St. Joseph.

The California attorney general’s office, which approved the alliance in February, is now investigating whether Hoag Hospital is doing enough to ensure that there are accessible alternatives for elective abortions, especially for low-income women.

The office is also looking into whether Hoag officials were accurate in reporting that the hospital did fewer than 100 elective abortions each year.

Kathrine Agnew said doctors such as her husband objected to Hoag being deceptive with physicians about providing women’s healthcare. She said the issue with them isn’t one of abortion rights.

“It’s a community hospital,” she said. “What’s in community that’s taking women’s rights away?”

She said her husband’s office typically performed abortions for nonviable fetuses with abnormalities.

“It’s not something we take lightly. We take lots and lots of time talking with the people” who are choosing to have an abortion, said Agnew, a mother of 10 children.

Durnian said the neighborhood stands behind Richard Agnew, who, she said, has delivered countless babies at Hoag

over more than four decades.

“We love Dr. Agnew. We support Dr. Agnew,” she said. “If he allows patients to make their own choices, he should be able to do that.”

Last week, people on both sides of sides of the issue demonstrated outside the hospital.

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