

# UNLICENSED DOCTOR CLEARED OF PERFORMING ABORTIONS

By **Terry Wilson**

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**A** Cook County Circuit Court judge on Monday acquitted a former physician of charges that he gave abortions to women without a license, but he convicted him of giving a pelvic examination to a woman while he was unlicensed.

Arnold Bickham, 54, who had worked at the Friendship Medical Center at 9133 S. Stony Island Ave., appeared before Cook County Circuit Judge Michael Getty, who acquitted Bickham of more serious charges that he performed abortions without a medical license.

Bickham and his co-defendant, Julian Banzon, 59, were convicted of violating the Medical Practice Act of 1987, which mandates that medical personnel either be licensed or supervised by a licensed physician before they administer medical care.

Banzon never had a license to practice medicine in the United States, and Bickham`s medical license had been revoked in 1988.

While reading his ruling, Getty criticized the "garden variety"

investigation that the Department of Professional Regulation and the state`s attorney`s office performed.

"It appears to the court from evidence presented that this case began with assumption," Getty said. "It was assumed that defendant Bickham was violating the law because he was associated with Friendship Medical Center. Because Bickham was still associated with Friendship Medical Center, it was assumed that he was still doing abortions."

Bickham`s defense attorney produced records that indicated that licensed physicians at the clinic had performed the abortions.

Getty urged prosecutors and investigators from the Department of Professional Regulation to convene a special grand jury to investigate the use of unlicensed practitioners by area clinics and hospitals—a practice that several associates of Bickham`s said was commonplace in the Chicago area.

The verdict ended the case that prosecutors Douglas Wynne and Rimas Cernius said was difficult to prove because the witnesses who had received the abortions were asleep during surgery.

"I`m very happy that Arnold Bickham was finally convicted of the unlicensed practice of medicine," Wynne said. "It was a very difficult case to prove."

Bickham`s license was revoked for gross negligence after an 18-year-old woman bled to death in 1986 after Bickham performed an abortion.

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