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VA. DOCTOR GUILTY IN PATIENT ASSAULTS

JUDGE ORDERS IMMEDIATE JAILING FOR 2 YEARS IN SEXUAL-CONTACT CASE

By Patricia Davis

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A Fairfax County judge sentenced a McLean gynecologist last night to two years in jail after three of his patients testified that he kissed one, massaged the genitals of another and told a third he would like to rent her for the weekend.

General District Court Judge Robert J. Smith found Arie Snir, 49, guilty on all three counts of simple assault. Over objections from Snir's attorney, Smith ordered the doctor to jail immediately as the three former patients who had testified against him hugged each other and cheered in the courtroom.

Before Snir was sentenced, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Grace Carroll told the judge that the gynecologist assaulted the three women, ages 23, 24 and 28, when they were in a vulnerable position with few or no clothes on.

"He took advantage of their trust in a most reprehensible manner," Carroll said.

Snir, licensed to practice in Virginia since 1976, told the judge he had dedicated himself to helping his patients and teaching them to more fully understand their bodies. Anything he had done that offended them, Snir said, was unintentional.

One of Snir's attorneys, Karen McDonald, argued that the prosecutor was trying to prove a sexual abuse case, not simple assault. She declined to comment after the trial, and it could not be learned if Snir plans to appeal.

Carroll said a state medical board has temporarily suspended Snir's license until a full hearing can be held.

Yesterday's trial took all day and ended at 7:40 p.m., an extraordinary length for a misdemeanor case. "Felony jury trials go faster than this," the judge said at one point.

The three complainants -- from Vienna, Centreville and Fairfax -- each testified that she was assaulted by the doctor during an office visit. The first incident occurred in July of last year and the others this March and April.

One woman said Snir told her that her breasts were beautiful and that if his wife saw them she would be jealous. He also made lewd comments about what he liked to do sexually with beautiful black women, she said.

"It was just so bizarre," she testified. "I never experienced anything like that. I was in shock."

Snir denied on the witness stand that he had made some of the remarks attributed to him and said that others were misunderstood or were meant as a joke. He said some of his actions were part of a routine gynecological exam.

Carroll responded by asking whether Snir thought it appropriate to remark that he enjoys a particular form of sex with "beautiful black women" or to massage a woman's genital area "when she comes in for birth control pills."

The prosecutor said Snir also kissed one woman on the neck during a breast examination and, noticing a ring in her navel, said he would like to "attach her to a ceiling fan and perform sexual acts on her."

Fairfax police investigator Dennis Harris testified that after Snir's arrest in May, the doctor commented: "I guess I better stop kissing my patients."