Two die in Queens abortuary

by Cathy Ramey

Queens, NY — A 33 year old Queens woman died on July 9 following the abortion procedure she purchased to end the life of her child. Guadelupe Negron, a native of Honduras was officially pronounced dead less than an hour after her arrival at a local emergency room.

According to the Medical Examiner's office and a paramedic who responded to the call, Negron was already dead before emergency medical personnel arrived on the scene. The abortionist had punctured Negron's uterus and she bled to death. Paramedics were called only after the abortionist failed to resuscitate her.

Paramedic, Freddy Noboa, described the emergency call in which Negron was found at the abortuary. A breathing tube meant to enhance the flow of oxygen by feeding O2 into swollen lung tissue was reportedly misinserted into the woman's stomach. An oxygen mask covering her face was partially filled with stomach fluids which were seeping into the woman's mouth.

During initial attempts to revive Mrs. Negron on-site at the abortuary, Noboa stated that the abortionist, who refused to give his name, showed no concern for the woman. "All he kept saying was, 'When you get to the E.R., make sure you tell them I gave O2." The woman's baby was also already dead prior to the arrival of emergency medical personnel. "It was frightening," Noboa stated. "I've seen shootings, stabbings, you name it. But this stopped me in my tracks. It was a horror scene."

Negron, who sold ice-cream and flowers with her husband, had scheduled the procedure without her husband's knowledge. Complaining of feeling ill, Mrs. Negron waited until her husband left for work, and then contacted a niece to take her in to the abortuary. The Metro Women's Center abortuary where Guadelupe Negron died reportedly had charged $800.00 to kill the five month baby.

Elena Munzon, Negron's niece, 20 years old, reports being alarmed from the start while waiting for her aunt to undergo the abortion. In testimony given to the police and later the media, Munzon stated that another Hispanic woman was returned to the waiting area crying in pain, "Help me, I don't feel good, call my family." While trying to assist the woman Munzon heard abortuary staffers calling for an ambulance. One hour later she was informed that her aunt was dead as the result of a perforated cervix.

Guadelupe Negron and her baby are survived by her husband, Herminio, and four children. ■

Photo captions:

Left: Mrs. Negron, in a photo taken before she and her baby were killed.

Right: The Metro Women's Center mill closed temporarily after the death of 33 year old Guadelupe Negron.

Abortionist barred at Queens Hospital in past

Following the death of a Queens woman, it was announced that New York abortionist David Benjamin had been barred from surgery at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Utica, NY. Benjamin, who apparently worked under an alias as Elyas Bonrouhi, was charged with failing to meet "the bare minimum standard of care," according to Chief of OB/GYN services, Dr. Anthony Dardano. The details surrounding his short tenure at the hospital came less than a week after Guadelupe Negron and her child were killed by Benjamin.

In a full disclosure by St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Dr. Dardano stated that David Benjamin had initially been refused the right to treat patients at the hospital. However, Benjamin threatened legal action, and the hospital gave him privileges with the requirement that he treat patients "only when Dr, Dardano was present."

"I was required to be the total supervisor of his work. I had to be on his neck for everything he did," Dardano states. Benjamin was finally asked to leave in 1982, and he moved his practice into his own home.

Apparently Negron's death is just one of a series of problems that have plagued the failed medical career of Benjamin. New York Department of Health reports indicate a series of attempts to stop the abortionist from practicing medicine by charging him with 47 counts of incompetence and professional misconduct. Accusations have included "operating without an anesthetic, attempting complicated deliveries in his office despite patient objections, and sewing the wrong parts of a woman's anatomy together after an operation."

The allegations against Benjamin span a period of approximately two years and involve at least 11 women. Testimony from a state report claims that during a vaginal surgery the anesthetic wore off. Benjamin continued operating despite the fact that "the patient was screaming in pain."

In a second case, Benjamin was found to have started sewing a woman's uterus improperly following a cesarean section. He was charged with stitching the front of the woman's uterus to the back wall of the uterus rather than closing the incision top to bottom. A number of other cases too involved what has been termed "sloppy surgery."

In one episode of professional misconduct, Benjamin insisted on delivering a baby in his office over the objections of the mother. Later, after she went to the hospital anyway, Benjamin attempted to bribe her, into testifying that a home delivery had been planned all along, with the promise of $150.00. Despite the serious nature of the misconduct, all charges only resulted in a three month suspension of Benjamin's license in 1986.

In October of 1992, new charges were brought against the abortionist. However because a New York court ruling prohibits the release of any information on cases that are being investigated, there is no indication what the details of the latest complaints may be. It is known only that the charges stem from surgeries performed on two women at the Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center in Brooklyn.

Former supervisor, Dr. Anthony Dardano declined to speculate on the circumstances surrounding Mrs. Negron's death, but he did voice concerns that Benjamin would cause significant harm to a patient one day. "With his past record, it was just a matter of time," he said.

Although the Queen's prosecutor's office is investigating the death and would like to interview him, David Benjamin is still at large. Attempts to reach anyone at his home phone have failed, and neighbors reported seeing his family packing a car on the night of Negron's death. ■

Doctor accused of racist/sexist targeting

Toronto, Ontario — A sex-determintion clinic that recently opened in Buffalo, N.Y. has some of Metro Toronto's South Asian community upset because they believe the clinic encourages women to abort female unborn babies.

And the resurgence in the use of a Washington State clinic run by the same doctor is rekindling a fight between Vancouver, BC's South Asian community and the U.S. doctor who runs the facility.

Koala Labs, operated by Californian Dr. John Stephens, offers a sex-determination service for women using an ultrasound technique that he claims is 100 percent accurate.

Dr. Stephens' Buffalo clinic charges $1,100 (U.S.) or twice that in Canadian funds for the service, which includes a sex determination and a voice-narrated video tape of the ultrasound.

Dr. Stephens runs clinics in California and opened a clinic a few years ago in Blaine, Washington about 50 kilometers southeast of Vancouver.

He targeted Vancouver's large South Asian community, taking out advertisements in ethnic newspapers, and the doctor is using Metro Toronto-area ethnic publications to advertise his Buffalo clinic.

The practice of aborting female fetuses is common throughout Asia, where tradition often dictates parents of a girl provide a costly dowry when marriage takes place, a private study made public last year reported.

As a result, men outnumbered women in India last year by about 30 million. Current data on the number of abortions performed each year in India do not exist, but one study of private clinics showed that about 78,000 fetuses were terminated from 1978 to 1983.

"But this is not a South Asian problem. This is a sexism problem," said Harjeet Badwall, founder of South Asian Issues Discussed.

"The dowry is a sexist tradition. Women are an asset not a liability."

Ms. Badwall, a York University student, said her organization is targeting Star India — a South Asian newspaper in Mississauga which has been running the quarter-page ad for about two months — in a letter-writing campaign to discontinue that ad.

But Star India's editor, Malvander Grewal, said he has received only one complaint about the advertisement. He said it does not promote abortion on the basis of sex. "Women are loved in our community and addressed as mother and sister. In our religions, we have many goddesses that we respect."

Raminder Dosanjh, a spokeswoman for Vancouver's India Mahila Association, said Dr. Stephens, despite great pressure from Vancouver's South Asian community, refused to close the clinic.

In 1990, Mrs. Dosanjh led a campaign against the Blaine clinic, focusing on ethnic publications that were running the advertisements for Koala Labs. Their actions resulted in most papers dropping the advertisements and a drop in the number of referrals to the clinic. But since then, Mrs. Dosanjh said the publications have resumed running the advertisements and will not stop. ■

> *Some of Metro Toronto's South Asian community [are] upset because they believe the clinic encourages women to abort female unborn babies.*