

\$1.9M settlement in botched abortion

Woman sued Englewood clinic, 2 doctors in '07

By **JAMES M. O'NEILL**
STAFF WRITER

Metropolitan Medical Associates in Englewood, among the state's largest abortion clinics, reached a \$1.9 million settlement with a woman who suffered massive hemorrhaging, a coma, a stroke and a hysterectomy after she had an abortion at the facility in 2007.

The incident led to an inspection by the state, which shut the facility down for more than a month until improvements were made.

The settlement includes \$1 million from the facility, \$575,000 from one of the doctors involved in the case and \$325,000 from another doctor who had assisted. The settlement was first reported in the *New Jersey Law Journal*.

Rasheedah Dinkins filed the suit in 2007 against the facility and two doctors, Keith Gresham, who was Dinkins' attending physician, and Nicholas Kotopoulos, who assisted after Dinkins started to bleed excessively.

Dinkins, then 20, visited the clinic in January of that year for a second-trimester abortion. The Englewood clinic is one of only a few in the state to perform second-trimester abortions.

In coma three weeks

Hours after the procedure, Dinkins, back at home in Newark,

became sluggish, then was unable to walk or talk. Her mother called for an ambulance, and, by the time it arrived, Dinkins had passed out.

At Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, doctors gave her transfusions and removed her damaged uterus. She suffered a stroke and her left lung collapsed from the severe blood loss. She needed a respirator and tracheotomy. Dinkins was in a coma for three weeks.

Newark Beth Israel filed a formal complaint with the state, saying it was concerned the abortion may have been done improperly. That led to a state inquiry of Metropolitan Medical, which performs more than 10,000 abortions a year.

"We learned from the case that their volume of procedures was one factor that led to this problem," said Roseland-based lawyer Adam Slater, who represented Dinkins. "When you do too many procedures, you start to lose sight of the fact that these are all separate patients and separate procedures."

Dinkins had "greater-than-expected bleeding, they couldn't stop it, they eventually took extraordinary measures to stop it, and then they sent her home," Slater said. "They should have sent her to Englewood Hospital, which is less than a mile away, where they would have examined her and found she had a uterine rupture. They would have treated her, and she would have been fine. But the

damage from her excessive bleeding led to catastrophic injuries."

'Dirt and debris'

After the incident was reported, state inspectors found dirty forceps, rusty crochet hooks used to remove IUDs and a quarter-inch of dark red "dirt and debris" under an examining table in the Engle Street clinic.

The state let the facility reopen in March 2007.

Frank Capese, a Westfield-based lawyer who represents the facility, said on Thursday that he could not discuss details of the settlement, reached over the summer, because the facility's insurance carrier instituted a strict confidentiality agreement as part of the settlement.

"However, there's always inherent danger in any medical procedure," Capese said. "The facility has an excellent treatment record, and they have served tens of thousands of patients without incident. That doesn't negate the sympathy the facility has for any problems this patient may have experienced."

Slater said Dinkins has made an "extremely good recovery" from her injuries.

The suit also named the National Abortion Federation, a group that Metropolitan Medical Associates belongs to.

E-mail: oneillj@northjersey.com