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Woman reported abuse by doctor 3 years before arrest

Records indicate the hospital knew of complaints about Dr. Frederick Field

By JOE ROJAS-BURKE
THE OREGONIAN

A patient at Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles told hospital officials she'd been sexually abused by a doctor in an operating room three years before similar reports from other women prompted the hospital to call police.

Police arrested anesthesiologist Frederick George Field on July 28, 2011. He faces charges of raping one woman and sexually abusing 11 others incapacitated by anesthetics or sedatives.

Lawyers representing six of the alleged victims in a civil lawsuit obtained records of the 2008 incident and filed them in court Wednesday. Gregory Kafoury of the Portland law firm Kafoury & McDougal said hospital leaders knew or had reason to know Field sexually abused one or more hospital patients or employees months before the hospital notified police.

Mid-Columbia Medical Center's President and Chief Executive Duane Francis has repeatedly said the hospital administration first heard reports of sexual abuse by Field in May 2011 and immediately notified police.

Field
Anesthesiologist faces rape charge

"We maintain that our response has been timely and appropriate and we are looking forward to the time when we can vigorously defend our organization against these allegations," hospital spokesman Richard Baltus said Wednesday. He said allegations against Mid-Columbia Medical Center "tell only one side of the story and absolutely do not accurately depict our organization's response to incidents involving Dr. Field and patients or employees of our hospital."

In the records disclosed Wednesday, hospital Vice President Dianne Storby responds to a January 2008 complaint from a 26-year-old woman who said Field fondled her and placed her hands on his genitals during a surgical procedure. Brief, handwritten notes indicate that hospital managers interviewed operating room staff and found no reason to believe the complaint. The notes say Field is "very professional" and "most careful about liability issues."

Messages to the hospital's human resources department document a May 2010 incident in which a nurse reported that Field approached her from behind, put his hands under her blouse and fondled her when they happened to be alone together in an operating room preparing for a surgery.

The Oregonian's continuing coverage of the accusations against Frederick George Field.The messages sent by Dixon Ohnemus, an official in RN surgical services at Mid Columbia Medical Center, said the nurse declined to make a formal complaint but said she and other female operating room nurses had "agreed to make it a point to not leave anyone alone in Dr. Field's presence."

In another message, Ohnemus told human resources he'd heard that Field had done things to make another nurse "uncomfortable." That nurse, he said, did not wish to make a statement. But he noted that she "sees to it that she is not ever alone with Dr. Field while on call."

A 66-year-old woman who has accused Field of sexually abusing her in an operating room on Feb. 10, 2011, says she reported it immediately but the hospital did not take her claim seriously. Hand-written hospital notes dated Feb. 10, discuss the complaint and the hospital's plan to have a physician talk with the woman before her discharge. Kafoury said the notes were written by Storby, the hospital vice president.

Field has not entered a plea, said Wasco County District Attorney Eric Nisley. Field was jailed until Dec. 16 when he posted a $275,000 security and was released with restrictions, including an electronic ankle bracelet that tracks his movements.

Most of Field's accusers say he touched their genitals or breasts, or forced them to touch his genitals while they were rendered physically helpless under his care. One woman said Field forced her to have sexual intercourse in 2008. Some of the women were patients undergoing treatment and others were hospital employees who did not come forward until recently for fear that they would lose their jobs, prosecutors said in an affidavit.

The alleged crimes date back to September 2007. The most recent took place July 24, 2011, about two months after the hospital went to the police.

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