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Sex assaults at hospital get man life

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MARIETTA — Cobb Superior Court Judge Reuben Green sentenced former nurse-anesthetist Paul Patrick Serdula to life plus 25 years Friday afternoon for the videotaped sexual assaults of 19 women and girls.

But Serdula's lawyer, Jimmy Berry, intends to appeal the conviction as early as next week.

In April, Judge Green found Serdula, 49, guilty of assaulting 19 victims, including two girls under 16, at a local hospital surgery center and a dentist's office.

"My intent ... is to send you to life in prison followed by 25 years in prison with the intent that if you did get out you would be on probation for the remainder of your life," he told Serdula Friday afternoon. "People are supposed to be able to trust doctors. People trust them blindly."

Assistant District Attorney Rusty Knox said the state was satisfied.

"It's a fair sentence," Knox said. "The goal was to attempt to keep a serial offender off the streets and give the victims peace of mind that at least he cannot do this to them again."

Prior to sentencing, Green spoke to the victims and their families who were in the courtroom.

"Unfortunately there is nothing that I'm going to do that makes what has happened to you go away," he said. "The best thing I can do is make sure that Mr. Serdula is held accountable for his actions and that he never has an opportunity to do this to anyone again."

Several of the women were sexually assaulted while under anesthesia to give births to their children.

Green said he couldn't imagine the birthday of a child being a constant reminder of the abuse, or a nurse's constant reminder that every time she goes to work, she thinks about how she too was victimized.

“Or the 12-year-old child getting tested for STDs ... taking away that child’s innocence and that child’s trust in doctors has to be an incredibly aggravating circumstance,” he said.

Serdula was first arrested in November 2009, after a woman found a camera hidden beneath a bathroom sink at the Goldstein Garber and Salama dental office at 600 Galleria Parkway, and staff there called 911. He was later released on \$50,000 bond but was re-arrested about a week later on child molestation charges after one victim was identified as a child.

In July 2010, he was again released, this time on \$250,000 bond, before being arrested a third time, in December 2010 on additional charges of unlawful surveillance, aggravated sodomy and sexual assault. He has been held without bond at the Cobb County Jail since then.

Serdula admitted to the facts of the case to save the victims from a trial, but did not plead guilty so as to preserve grounds to appeal. Judge Green convicted Serdula in a bench trial.

On Friday, Berry said he intends to file an appeal of the conviction as early as next week.

Berry has previously said an appeal would likely contest the process by which police obtained a search warrant for Serdula’s cellphone, on which multiple images of assaults were found; and the fact that Judge Green, a former prosecutor in the District Attorney’s Office, did not recuse himself.

Last spring, five female patients whom police believe were sexually assaulted by Serdula while under anesthesia at WellStar Cobb Hospital settled a civil suit against the health system, though the settlement terms were sealed.

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