

[<<Back](#)

## Doctor Accused of Sexually Assaulting Patient

*Burlington, Vermont - June 5, 2007*

Dr. Joseph Abate has been at UVM and Fletcher Allen Health Care for about 10 years. He specializes in sports injuries and is an orthopedic consultant for UVM and St. Michael's College teams. He also participates in the medical care of athletes at several high schools. We, in fact, have interviewed him for a previous news story.

Police now say that in February and March of this year Abate inappropriately touched and assaulted a 22-year-old patient in his office at the Sports Medicine Complex at Fletcher Allen's Fanny Allen campus in Colchester. Abate had operated on the victim's knees a number of times since she was in the eighth grade. During the two follow up visits this year police say Abate told the patient he needed to examine her hips despite the fact that she had no hip problems. It was during those examinations that police say he broke the law.

Police records also show Abate e-mailed the girl, and told her on numerous occasions to continue her follow up care by calling his personal cell phone. He also allegedly told her to come to the office when his work day was through. The victim told police that Abate's reasoning for this was so she would not have to wait and would not be billed by Fletcher Allen.

He pleaded not guilty to the charges Tuesday morning and has been released on \$10,000 bail. If convicted of sexual assault, Abate faces three years to life in prison and a \$25,000 fine.

Through his attorney, Dr. Abate claims their were legitimate medical reasons for what he did and he says he was acting in the patient's best medical interest. Nevertheless, Fletcher Allen Health Care and the College of Medicine Tuesday both placed Abate on paid leave while the investigation continues. They say his arrest is troubling and they are taking the allegations against him very seriously.

[Bridget Barry Caswell](#) - WCAX News



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