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## ALMA : 15 to 20 women tell officials of fondling

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ALMA — Police are investigating complaints from as many as 20 women who say they were sexually assaulted by a doctor during medical examinations, Crawford County Prosecuting Attorney Marc McCune said Wednesday.

Dr. Clarence Jay Arendall, 45, pleaded innocent last week to two counts of second-degree sexual abuse in Crawford County Circuit Court. He is free on \$ 25, 000 bond.

McCune said Alma Police Chief Russell White told him last week that investigators had received complaints from 15 to 20 women who claimed to have been sexually abused by Arendall. White was not available Wednesday afternoon to update the number of women who have made complaints.

McCune said the investigation is ongoing and that he would not consider filing any additional charges against Arendall until it is complete.

Also Wednesday, a spokesman for the Arkansas State Medical Board said the board voted last week to issue an emergency order of suspension of Arendall's medical license pending a disciplinary hearing in June.

Board attorney William Trice said the suspension was ordered for violating rules that forbid sexual contact between doctors and patients. He said two separate complaints were made against Arendall to the board.

Efforts to reach Arendall were unsuccessful Wednesday. The telephone at Arendall's Oakwood Family Medical Center in Alma was disconnected, and there is no phone listing for him in Alma.

The doctor has applied for county legal assistance. On an affidavit of indigency that Arendall filled out April 2 in circuit court to receive representation by the public defender, he listed himself as unemployed.

The charges now against Arendall accuse him of fondling women during appointments at the clinic on Feb. 13 and Feb. 14.

The two women listed as the victims in the criminal case went to Arendall with back problems, according to police records. During examinations, he fondled their thighs, genitals and buttocks and made sexual comments, the records state.

One assault occurred when Arendall's wife, Karla Arendall, who was the receptionist at the clinic, was sitting one room away, police said. Circuit court records show Karla Arendall filed for divorce on March 31.

Two women have filed separate civil complaints against Arendall in circuit court. One is also listed as a victim in the criminal case.

The other, who lives in Lavaca, said in the lawsuit filed March 12 that she visited Arendall for an ear infection in the past five years but that during the examination, he lowered her pants, touched her genitals, fondled her breasts and made sexual comments to her.

The suit also claims that Arendall made her addicted to pain pills. He prescribed the pain pills to her and had her pick them up each week at his office after hours, and continued to increase her prescription until she was taking 240 pills a week, the suit states.

The woman experienced seven seizures, of which Arendall was aware. And he knew that the pain medication was associated with seizures but continued to increase the dosage, the suit states.

He also threatened to have her husband fired from his job if the woman told anyone about his conduct, according to the lawsuit.

In both lawsuits, the women charge Arendall with violating fiduciary duty for the trust they placed in him to treat them properly, for the tort of outrage for the embarrassment and humiliation his actions caused, and for invasion of privacy.

Both lawsuits seek unspecified compensatory and punitive damages.

Arendall was arrested March 3.

McCune said a news organization learned of the warrant and ignored his request to hold the story until Arendall was arrested. He said Arendall, who was scheduled to fly into Fort Smith on March 29, was tipped off to the warrant because of the news story and got off the plane in Memphis. He appeared in court April 2.

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