



CRAWFORD COUNTY : Women testify to doctor's touching

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VAN BUREN - Prosecutors rested their sexual assault case against an Alma doctor Tuesday after hearing from nearly a dozen women who said he touched them inappropriately during office visits.

Dr. Clarence Jay Arendall is charged with two counts of second-degree sexual assault, a felony that carries up to 20 years in prison on each count if convicted. Crawford County Circuit Judge Gary Cottrell told the jury of nine men and three women that they could expect to begin deliberating the case sometime Thursday.

The trial is delayed today because Cottrell has other matters scheduled.

Arendall is accused of inappropriately touching and making sexual remarks to two women, in separate cases, who went to him for medical treatment.

The second of the two women testified Tuesday morning that Arendall rubbed his hands on either side of her thigh and touched her groin and buttocks. She said he told her, "Girl, dang, you have a nice butt."

The woman said she went to Arendall on Feb. 14, 2008, because of pain in her lower back and shoulders and numbness in some fingers.

She said Arendall had her stand while he did the examination. She said she was uncomfortable with Arendall because he pulled her pants and panties down to her knees, spun her around while he sat on a stool so he was at eye level with her groin and commented that she had a good body for having had two children.

She said she felt so uncomfortable that she called her 3-year-old son into the examination room so she wouldn't be alone with Arendall.

She said she sued Arendall in civil court over the office visit.

"I did not care about the money," she said. "I just wanted him to stop."

Ten other women gave similar testimony Tuesday. No matter what problem they took to Arendall, he ended up fondling their breasts or genitals, according to testimony.

One woman testified that he "played with my tattoo, he fondled my breasts and he undid my pants, and I'm in there for strep throat."

Robert Ross, a longtime family practice doctor in Van Buren, testified for the prosecution Tuesday that many of the practices Arendall used on his female patients were inappropriate.

He said male doctors never examine female patients without a nurse present. Male doctors never undress female patients. And he said he saw only rare instances where Arendall needed to touch the breasts, buttocks or vaginas of the women he examined.

Ross said he learned as early as medical school that physicians are not supposed to put patients in the position of being embarrassed and that becoming seductive or romantic with a patient during an examination is wrong.

Many of the women testified they felt paralyzed as Arendall touched them. Ross said that happens because patients tend to put physicians on a pedestal. They will not say anything because they believe the physician is doing his job and the patient does not want to offend him, he said.

He also said patients put trust in their doctor and doctors have the responsibility not to betray that trust.

Arendall presents his case beginning at 9 a.m. Thursday.

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