

Indiana abortion clinic is thriving

By Lynn Sweet

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INDIANAPOLIS—Bright tinsel Christmas garlands decorate Dr. Arnold Bickham's uncensored abortion clinic here, where it was business as usual Thursday.



**THE ABORTION
PROFITEERS**

Reaction

Health.

Bickham, whose two Chicago abortion clinics were shut down within the last month, Thursday walked into an operating room at Biogenetics in Indianapolis prepared to perform an abortion.

"She's in the best hands. She's getting the best care available," clinic administrator Harvey P. Jefferson assured a "worried" Sun-Times photographer, Jim Frost.

THE SUN-TIMES sent a reporter, posing as a pregnant woman, and a photographer to Indianapolis in the wake of dangerous medical practices in Chicago abortion clinics disclosed by the Sun-Times and the Better Government Assn. The couple had arranged by phone two days earlier for a \$150 abortion at the clinic. Armed with a urine sample of a pregnant woman, the two showed up at the clinic to see it in operation and to interview Bickham.

Bickham previously declined to comment or answer questions about his three abortion clinics in two states.

And, as with his two closed Chicago clinics—which are fighting legal clashes with Illinois authorities—the Indianapolis abortion facility Bickham started in August is gearing

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for a battle with Indiana officials.

In the latest development, the Indiana State Board of Health has turned over its report on alleged violations by Biogenetics' to the Indiana attorney general.

Bickham's present legal problems are not his first tangles with Indiana authorities. Lake County (Indiana) Coroner Albert Willardo Jr. said Bickham failed to respond to a subpoena requesting his appearance during a March inquest in the death of a Hammond (Ind.) woman, Sherry Emry, 26.

In March, Willardo ruled that Emry had died of a ruptured fallopian tube "resulting from (an) incomplete abortion" at Water Tower Reproductive Center Ltd., 840 N. Michigan, a Bickham clinic.

BIOGENETICS OCCUPIES a plush suite that takes up the entire fifth floor of a modern Indianapolis office building. There is no known connection between the Indiana Biogenetics clinic and Biogenetics Ltd., 520 N. Michigan, a clinic also investigated in the series.

Like his Water Tower Reproductive Center, Bickham's Indianapolis clinic is richly

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and tastefully decorated. Numbered prints and lithographs hang on the wall. Comfortable orange and white seating units are attractively arranged in the reception room. Soft, soothing music plays from unobtrusive speakers. The smaller counseling rooms also are attractively furnished.

Thursday is a long, busy day in the clinic, when it is open until 7 p.m. It also is one of two days that Bickham, 41, who lives on Chicago's South Shore, works in the Indianapolis clinic. By 1:30 p.m., abortion counselors had talked to 12 women seeking to end their

pregnancies. Eight more women were expected by nightfall.

The "pregnant" Sun-Times reporter and her "friend" asked to see Bickham before the abortion was to be performed, but that is something the doctor won't do. Clinic administrator Jefferson said it would be "too upsetting" to all concerned. If we wanted to see Bickham, it would have to be in an operating room.

The operating room has an orange examining table with chrome stirrup cups that support the feet. There's another orange chair in a corner, surgical equipment on another side of the small, square room, and paper gowns and packets of gauze stacked against a wall. Tan curtains shield sunlight streaming in the floor-to-ceiling windows.

THE NURSE insists that the patient undress from the waist down or else the doctor would not even come into the room.

Bickham, dressed in a turquoise surgical scrub suit, enters and motions to the "patient" to put her feet in the stirrups. But when the reporter identified herself, Bickham refused to answer questions about his abortion clinics and walked out of the operating room.

Bickham applied for an Indiana license in July, but when an Indiana State Board of Health inspector visited the clinic, she found apparent violations that filled three pages. Discrepancies included too few scrub-up sinks, improper storage of narcotics and no documentation that two staff doctors were legally authorized in Indiana to perform the procedures.

Also, a report filed by the inspector cited that the clinic did not employ at least one medical laboratory technician as required, tissue specimens were not examined and there was no arrangement with a nearby blood bank.

Bickham was notified of the violations and he responded by asking that his license application be disregarded.

THE HEALTH BOARD turned the matter over to the state attorney general's office, which is awaiting the outcome of three other cases against unlicensed abortion clinics. The question is whether the state has authority to license and regulate abortion clinics and the matter is just as unclear in Indiana as it is in Illinois. The court actions are in pretrial stages.

Bickham has been cited in the Sun-Times' series for, among other abortion abuses, not completing pathology reports as required by law and performing abortions on women who were not pregnant.

Meanwhile, in Indianapolis, Biogenetics continues to perform abortions.