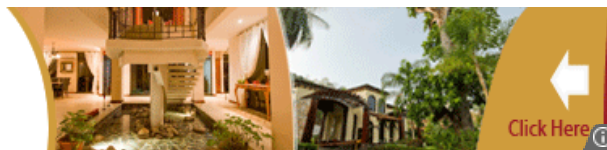




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Sex assault victims close to settlement

By ROB LAMBERTI, TORONTO SUN

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Dr. George Doodnaught.

North York General Hospital reached an agreement with the lawyers of 17 women who claimed they were sexually assaulted by an anesthesiologist.

The agreement sets up a process to reach financial settlements.

Dr. George Doodnaught was 61 when he was charged in March with three counts of sexual assault involving women ranging in age from the mid-30s to the late-80s, from 2007 to 2010.

Doodnaught graduated from the University of Glasgow in 1974 and has been registered with the Ontario College of Surgeons and Physicians since 1980, specializing in anesthesiology since 1981.

The criminal investigation was launched in February.

Toronto sex crimes Det.-Sgt. Kim Scanlan said Thursday the investigation continues and more charges are possible.

Doodnaught is awaiting trial.

Lawyer Darcy Merkur of the firm Thomson, Rogers said all 17 of the alleged victims "have spoken to police and it's in their hands."

He said there may be more victims who have yet to come forward. If so, they could be added to the civil case.

The agreement sets up a framework to reach financial awards for each claimant in a "friendlier" framework than in civil court, Merkur said.

The hospital and the law firm announced the agreement was reached allowing for an Alternate Dispute Resolution Process that will protect the victims' identities while allowing them to resolve their claims. In normal civil court procedure, their identities wouldn't be protected.

The hospital's president, Bonnie Adamson, said the hospital agreed "with a joint resolution process that will resolve the claims that are against the hospital in a way that is very sensitive to patients, respectful, protect their confidentiality and avoid a lengthy legal process."

Tim Rutledge, vice-president of medical and academic affairs, said the civil aspect of the case will proceed independently of the criminal case.

"We're doing this because we think this is the right thing to do," Rutledge said. "We think it's in the best interest of our patients."

He said the hospital reached the agreement without an admission of liability.

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