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Hospital seeks to reassure patients after doctor charged with sexual assault

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CAROLINE ALPHONSO

TORONTO — From Friday's Globe and Mail

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North York General Hospital rushed to reassure patients that its facility is safe after a Toronto doctor was charged with sexually assaulting three women who were under an anesthetic and undergoing surgery.

Officials say the alleged incidents involved only one anesthetist, and they acted quickly to remove the physician from the hospital.

"These allegations of sexual assault have been associated with one physician - an anesthetist. Patients should continue to feel safe when coming to our hospital for care," Bonnie Adamson, president and chief executive officer of North York General, told reporters yesterday.

George Doodnaught, 61, has been charged with three counts of sexual assault after three women told police they had been attacked while under an anesthetic. Details of the alleged assaults were not released.

Police began an investigation last month after one of the victims came forward. The alleged attacks took place between August, 2007, and last month.

Investigators say there could be more victims and are urging witnesses to come forward. The accused also worked at a number of clinics in the Greater Toronto Area.

"There are reasons that we discovered during the investigation which leads us to believe there may be other victims out there," Detective Constable Julie Stehlik said. "If we have other victims coming forward alleging sexual assault by this doctor, then we would certainly investigate that and lay charges accordingly."

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is also conducting an investigation.

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Although the hospital's operating rooms are busy places with a number of health-care workers moving in and out, there could be certain rare circumstances where a single person is with a patient, hospital officials said. Ms. Adamson said that once more is learned from the investigation, the hospital will identify areas for improvement. Dr. Doodnaught has worked at the hospital for the past 28 years.

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