

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

MEDICAL MISCONDUCT PART 3 OF 4

Former patients of Fabio Ortega say Endeavor Health failed to protect them from an abusive doctor



'THEY KNEW, AND DID NOTHING'

Story by Lisa Schencker and Emily Hoerner | Photographs by Stacey Wescott | Chicago Tribune

Editor's note: This story includes descriptions of sexual abuse.

As Victoria stepped into Dr. Fabio Ortega's exam room in the summer of 2017, she had no idea the gynecologist's career was hurtling toward destruction.

She didn't know that an angry husband had called more than five months earlier to complain about Ortega's treatment of his wife at a NorthShore University HealthSystem office in Skokie. The woman said the doctor had asked if it felt good when his fingers were inside her vagina, had conducted an ungloved breast exam, and had inquired about her sexual fantasies.

NorthShore, now called Endeavor Health, did not tell Victoria that Ortega was under police investigation as a result of that woman's allegations, according to a lawsuit Victoria later filed. The Skokie Police Department had already gone back and forth with Endeavor about Ortega over a span of several months, police records show.

Nor was Victoria aware of Ortega's previous history, including a patient who public records show had complained to Endeavor back in 2012, contending he had behaved inappropriately during an appointment.

"Victoria" is one of at least 30 women who have filed lawsuits alleging that Dr. Fabio Ortega sexually assaulted them during exams.

NEXT IN THIS SERIES:
Chaperones as a solution

Read the series so far at chicagotribune.com/medicalmisconduct

Had Victoria known those things, she never would have agreed to see Ortega at his Lincolnwood office, she said in an interview. Instead, she wound up in a room with a gynecologist who would later serve prison time for sexually abusing patients.

"That's what angers me the most, is NorthShore knew," she said. "They could have done something." The Tribune is using a pseudonym for Victoria because the Tribune generally does not name people who report being sexually assaulted or abused without their permission.

At least 30 women, including Victoria, have filed lawsuits alleging that Ortega sexually assaulted them during appointments over a span of three decades at

various Endeavor locations and, before that, at Swedish Hospital in Chicago, formerly Swedish Covenant. Most of the lawsuits allege that Endeavor and Swedish either knew or should have known that Ortega was a danger to patients. They contend the health system failed to protect them.

Turn to Abuse, Page 10

ShotSpotter technology a source of praise, scorn

System staying in city for now as dispute over usefulness continues

By Sam Charles and Megan Crepeau
Chicago Tribune

Early one morning last May, on a bungalow-lined street in Avalon Park, ShotSpotter detected real gunshots: more than half a dozen rounds fired.

It was a busy night, and officers didn't make it to the scene for more than half an hour. But when they arrived they found 24-year-old Aréanah Preston, a Loyola law student and Chicago police officer, fatally shot on her front lawn.

Late one night in January, on a residential block of Auburn Gresham, ShotSpotter detected what likely were just fireworks.

But the alert sent officers out looking for a shooter, and when they got there they heard a loud bang. One officer opened fire in the direction of a boy who had just set off a firecracker, but did not hit him.

The episodes paint a picture of the limits of a controversial system Chicago has decided to keep around well past this summer's Democratic National Convention after a protracted contract fight. Police see value in the system's ability to bring them to trouble including at times when no one calls 911, but its usefulness may quickly downgrade from there, experts said.

In recent weeks, long-standing criticisms have intensified, among them that the system is inaccurate, expensive and disproportionately harms people of color. Some attorneys argue ShotSpotter shouldn't be used in the courtroom or on the street, claims that judges could be sorting out for months if not years.

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INSIDE



TROY STOLT/FOR CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Building a forest in Brookfield

Zoo announces \$66 million Tropical Forests for primates as part of a major redesign that hopes to better emphasize conservation. **A+E**

QB prospects take turn in the spotlight

Caleb Williams, Drake Maye, Jayden Daniels: Friday's big stage at the NFL combine provided can't-miss theater. **Chicago Sports**

Art highlights fight for pretrial fairness

At DragonFly Gallery, an exhibit by Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice highlights ongoing fight for equity in the legal system. **Life+Travel**

TODAY'S WEATHER

High **71**
Low **55**



Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 26

\$5.75 city and suburbs and elsewhere
176th year No. 63
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ELECTION 2024

Downstate race highlights GOP move to right

Trump looms large as Bailey challenges Bost for Congress

By Rick Pearson and Jeremy Gorner
Chicago Tribune

MARION, Ill. — The day after former President Donald Trump endorsed his congressional opponent, a scorned Darren Bailey who had deeply coveted Trump's backing took to Facebook to deliver another of his near-daily video devotionals to supporters.

"I am so confident of victory because I believe that you know that you're not going to let an endorsement stand in the way of you doing the right thing — that you're going to show up, you're going to vote for the right person," Bailey said of his insurgent GOP primary challenge to five-term downstate U.S. Rep. Mike Bost.

While Bailey — whose unsuc-

cessful 2022 Republican bid for governor was embraced by Trump — had again courted the former president with frequent trips to Mar-a-Lago, he derided Trump's endorsement of Bost as an example of how "deals are made behind closed doors." After pledging fealty to Trump, Bailey now spun that he felt liberated and that "the blessing" of not getting the endorsement shows he's "not beholden to anyone."

"In a way, I felt a sense of relief that I will be able to stand up, stand firmly, confidently, resolutely," he said. "I will stand on our principles and values" and will "not be sold out."

In the deeply ruby red 12th Congressional District, the state's most Republican district encompassing all or part of 34 counties in the southernmost one-third of Illinois, Trump looms large. From within its boundaries — the

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TRENT SPRAGUE/TRIBUNE

Left: Former state Sen. Darren Bailey, who is running for Congress, speaks with reporters during Republican Day at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield on Aug. 17. **Right:** U.S. Rep. Mike Bost visits the Cumberland County Farm Bureau office in Toledo, Illinois, on Jan. 24.



JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE