

Florida MedSpa Doctor's License Suspended

Husband of Liposuction Victim: 'Doctors Are Supposed to Save a Life, Not Take It'

By ANDREA CANNING and MAGGIE BURBANK

The doctor who performed liposuction on a now-deceased Florida woman at a local spa had his license suspended and was called "an immediate danger to the public."

Rohie Kah-Orukotan, a 37-year-old mother of three went into the Weston MedSpa in Weston, Fla., Sept. 25, 2009, for a liposuction procedure. Something went horribly wrong on the operating table. Kah-Orukotan suffered seizures and was rushed to a nearby hospital where she was pronounced brain dead. Joseph Orukotan says his wife didn't have to die.

"Doctors are supposed to save a life, not take it," he said. "It's a very, very painful experience. It's just an experience that has no end. It's going to remain with me for the rest of my life."

After two weeks, Orukotan was forced to make the heartbreaking decision to take his wife off life support. "I felt like I killed my own wife," he said. "And it was even harder when I had to explain to the kids."

Orukotan's family can't understand how the registered nurse could have trusted her life at a spa that she frequented for massages and manicures and doubles as a tanning salon. Nor can they understand how for more than five months after the tragedy, her doctor, Omar Brito, was still performing cosmetic procedures.

Last week, the state's surgeon general suspended Brito's license and accused him of medical malpractice. An explosive emergency order said that Rohie Kah-Orukotan had excessive levels of lidocaine in her system, had been given the powerful sedation drug propofol with no anesthesiologist present, and that Brito had "inadequate training."

It says Brito took a three-day course in plastic surgery which totaled just 18 hours of training.

"The conduct in this case from beginning to end was unequivocally outrageous," said Orukotan's lawyer Michael Freedland. "His training was inadequate, the facility was inadequate, the specialists they didn't have available in terms of the anesthesia that was used was outrageous&And they had none of the requisite emergency resources available to them to handle an emergency should one arise."

Also, the order says a crash cart was not present at the spa during Kah-Orukotan's procedure.

Brito's criminal defense attorney Brian Beiber said they sharply disagree with the board's findings, and that the procedure involved minor sedation and could be legally done at the med spa. He also claims the state has incorrect information about the

amount of anesthesia and when it was given.

Toxicology reports that will state the exact cause of death have not yet been released.

Beiber said that Brito "followed the letter of law," completing the required three days of training to perform plastic surgery in the state.

"Three-day intensive course with hands-on training, which Dr. Brito had, in addition to approximately two dozen liposuction or lipo-sculpture procedures under his belt at the time he performed this surgery, yes, it's enough," Beiber said. "He had enough experience."

The report also said that in these circumstances, the procedure should never have taken place in a med spa, which is raising new questions about the oversight of these facilities that offer more than just tanning and waxing.



Customers looking for convenience are turning to med spas for more complicated treatments, like Botox, laser procedures and non-invasive liposuction. As a result, med spas have grown by 85 percent in the past two years.

David Goldberg, a dermatologist and consultant for the International Medical Spa Society, says that while med spas are safe, the lack of oversight can sometimes place patients in the wrong hands.

"You have potentially high school kids doing some of these laser procedures because these procedures are so poorly regulated," Goldberg said. "Who is performing these procedures, that's the issue. It's not the med spas that's the issue, it's who they are hiring to do these procedures because they want to deliver this care in a much cheaper fashion."

The American Society of Dermatologic Surgery says inexperience has led to an increase in burning, scars and even death.

In 2005, Deborah Hellman went to the Pure Med Spa in Chicago for laser treatment on her neck and chest to remove sun spots.

"I had heard about a treatment that was a simple non-invasive procedure that took 20 minutes that you could do over your lunch break," she said.

After her third laser treatment, Hellman suffered second degree burns when she claims the technician turned the settings up too

high.

"I did say something to the nurse who was doing the procedure, 'This is hurting me, this is hurting me!' and she continued," Hellman said. "It was terrible. There was almost no skin where the burning was so it was extremely painful. It was so painful that, for the first week, I wasn't able to wear any type of clothing around my neck and chest area."

A doctor was on staff at the spa, but Hellman says she didn't have access to him for days.

"Part of the trust factor was that they implied that they had a doctor on the premises, but in reality, when I did have the problem, it took two days before I could see any type of doctor even associated with this practice and it was a doctor that wasn't even in their building," she said.

Hellman's case was settled out of court. Pure Med Spa, now owned by Brite Smile, did not return "Nightline's" calls, but did release a statement at the time, saying: "We have performed thousands of laser treatments. The vast, overwhelming majority of our clients are completely satisfied with their results."

"The media is trying to make us believe that all these simple procedures -- because they are non invasive procedures -- are a piece of cake and that there are no risks involved and the truth is, there are risks involved," Hellman said. "Seems like the easy American way, but I learned the hard way. I think everyone should think long and hard."

What should you think about before visiting a med spa? Goldberg said to find out the qualifications of the person delivering the procedure and to ask if a physician is supervising and for details on his or her degree.

"We need better regulation, better enforcement and we need to make sure that physicians are not performing surgeries in settings that are dangerous," Freedland said.

For Joseph Orukotan, change isn't happening fast enough. The father hopes his wife's death, now part of a criminal investigation, is the wake-up call the country needs to put people's lives before profit.

"The legislation, the congressmen, the women, whoever is concerned. Please listen to my cry," he pleaded. "My children wake up with nightmares, cry every single day."



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