

Spohn

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Four California physicians being stripped of licenses

By Bob Egelko

SACRAMENTO (AP) — Four doctors, including one of California's major practitioners of sex-change surgery, are being stripped of their licenses by the state.

But a lawyer for plastic surgeon John R. Brown called Brown a "pioneer" in the field of transsexual surgery and said an attempt would be made in court to block revocation of his license.

Richard Spohn, director of the state Department of Consumer Affairs, announced the revocations yesterday and declared that the year-old Board of Medical Quality Assurance, part of his department, has increased the state's vigilance against incompetent doctors.

"The new medical board is aggressively rooting out the bad cookies," Spohn said, noting that the board included some non-doctors.

Department spokesman Vernon Leeper said Spohn plans to ask the Legislature next month for the power of immediate suspension in extreme cases, rather than letting a doctor continue to practice for a year while revocation proceedings are pending.

Leeper said that out of more than 200 disciplinary cases this year, about 20 California doctors will lose their licenses, an increase over previous years.

The four doctors whose licenses will be revoked on different days next month are:

—Brown, who has practiced in San Francisco and now has an office in Los Angeles. The board said he had failed to con-

duct proper physical and psychological screening of patients for the operation and had not arranged for proper post-operative care.

—Patrick Orrock of Brea. The board said his license was suspended this year after improper treatment of a heart attack victim who died, but he moved to Riverside and continued to practice.

—Seymour M. Solomon of San Francisco. The department said he had pleaded no contest to possessing heroin and had written three fraudulent prescriptions for money to support a heroin habit.

—Raphael Haley of La Puente. The department said he had been convicted of lewd conduct and failed to meet the terms of his probation.

Brown's case was documented by the board in a 13-page complaint that detailed several cases of patients who developed serious complications after transsexual surgery.

The complaint also said Brown had allowed an unlicensed person to act as a doctor and to promote Brown's practice at parties to which transsexuals were invited.

The board said Brown sent would-be patients to a psychiatrist for an hour or two, then reserved the right to override their recommendation on whether to operate. By contrast, Stanford University's hospital, a major center of transsexual surgery, requires a two-year waiting period and extensive physical and psychological testing, the board said.

But Brown's lawyer, Franklin Laven, said Brown consid-

ered the Stanford standards needlessly restrictive. He said Brown had performed about 250 transsexual operations in the last several years, compared to only a few a year at Stanford.

"He is a pioneer in that field," Laven said. "Transsexuals are crying for help. They're lost souls. Some don't want to live if they can't get his operation."

Laven said there would be an attempt to block Brown's license revocation in court before it took effect Jan. 22.

He noted that Paul Doyle, the state administrative judge in the case, said it appeared Brown "has something of value to offer" as a sex-change surgeon if his license wasn't revoked.