

# State to act on abortion clinics

By Pamela Zekman  
and Karen Koshner

Gov. Thompson announced Sunday that he will form a special task force of four state

agencies to crack down on abuses in abortion clinics exposed in The Sun-Times and Better Government Assn. investigation of dangerous medical care in four facilities.

Thompson acted after he read the first installment of The Abortion Profiteers series in the Sunday Sun-Times. The governor telephoned the

newspaper to announce his intended crackdown.

Thompson said the task force also will look into whether new legislation or regulations are necessary to ensure that safe abor-

tions are available at walk-in clinics.

"I have vetoed bills that would drive women underground [for illegal abortions], again and I have to be sure that what we have above ground is operating right," Thompson said. "We either need better enforcement of our present laws and regulations or our present laws and regulations are inadequate."

Meanwhile, Dr. Clifton L. Reeder, president of the Chicago Medical Society, announced that he will appoint a committee of doctors to investigate conditions at abortion clinics. He said he saw no great urgency in the problem.

THOMPSON SAID he will meet with the heads of the Department of Public Health, which licenses clinics, the Department of Registration and Education, which licenses doctors and nurses, and representatives of the Law Enforcement and Public Aid departments to discuss what action should be taken.

He said he also will appoint to the task force a representative from his office, Thomas Berkshire, to act as a liaison.

"I want each department on this task force to tell me what we need and what role each of them can play to end the kind of abuses you have exposed," Thompson said.

During a five-month investigation, The Sun-Times and the BGA worked undercover in six abortion clinics, four of which were found to be assembly-line operations where profits come ahead of patient care.

Investigators found unsterile conditions and haphazard clinic care, incompetent and unqualified doctors who performed abortions in a fraction of the time experts say is safe—sometimes without waiting for pain-killing anesthetics to take effect—and sometimes on women who weren't pregnant. They saw clinics that failed to order critical postoperative pathology reports and dangerously shoddy record keeping by aides who falsified records of patients' vital signs.

THOMPSON SAID that if necessary, the task force could have legislation introduced this month to give the public health department more power to curb abuses uncovered.

"Driving women back underground to the illegal abortionists would be worse than

what we have. Requiring all abortions be performed in hospitals would be unnecessary and too expensive. If present laws and regulations are not good enough to protect patients, then what we will do is draw up new ones fast," the governor said.

Thompson said he would consider adding more IDPH inspectors if additional staff was necessary.

IDPH now has six nurses to inspect 24 state abortion clinics and about 130 hospitals not regulated by the Chicago Board of Health.

Dr. Patricia Nolan, IDPH deputy director, said the department has "begun discussing revising" state standards for abortion clinics, pointing out that the agency "may have underestimated what it takes to run a well-functioning clinic" when the regulations were first written in 1973 after abortions became legal.

"They are minimum standards and we are finding that some clinics are meeting the minimal standards but aren't functioning

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**THE ABORTION  
PROFITEERS  
Reaction**

# Task force to crack down on abortion clinics

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property," Dr. Nolan said.

IN ANOTHER development, the director of the Illinois Department of Registration and Education said the agency will "investigate fully" all allegations of dangerous medical practices exposed in The Sun-Times and BGA investigation of abortion clinics.

"If what you are writing about is true, it is an unacceptable standard of medical care," said Joan G. Anderson, director of the agency that licenses doctors and nurses. "Much of what I read [in the first story of the series] falls within what I would call, to put it mildly, unacceptable medical care."

Meanwhile, a Cook County grand jury has subpoenaed the records of at least one abortion clinic in reaction to findings uncovered in the investigation.

State's Atty. Bernard Carey declined to comment on the action, noting, "The matter is before a grand jury."

Carey has assigned at least two assistant state's attorneys working under the supervision of Thomas Burnham, chief of special prosecutions, to follow up on disclosures that women have been victimized by dangerous medical practices and fraud in abortion clinics and referral agencies.

AS PART OF Carey's investigation, the

grand jury has subpoenaed the medical records of dozens of patients at one of the biggest clinics operating on Michigan Av. The clinic is one of six where Sun-Times reporters and BGA investigators worked undercover as medical assistants, nurses' aides and counselors.

Anderson said she also was concerned about the findings that nonlicensed personnel are performing duties—such as giving injections and examinations and writing prescriptions—that should be done by licensed practitioners and nurses.

Dr. Reeder said he will appoint a committee of five doctors plus himself and Dr. Lawrence

Hirsch, president-elect of the Chicago Medical Society, to look into the question of possible medical abuse in abortion clinics.

Dr. Reeder said he had not yet read the first installments of The Sun-Times series. But he said he thought the matter was "blown out of all proportion to reality."

"We don't know until we investigate what the hell is going on. Abortions have been going on for hundreds of thousands of years. Women have been dying from abortions as long as they've been going on. There's a certain amount of risk in it," said Dr. Reeder.

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