

Man convicted of sexually assaulting patient at Mater

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A man has been convicted of sexually assaulting a patient while working as a care assistant at the Mater Private Hospital in Dublin. Folajimmy Awode (31) of Ballinteer House, Tyrellstown, Dublin had pleaded not guilty to sexual assault of a female patient at the Mater Private Hospital, Eccles Street, Dublin 7 in November 2013.

The woman, who cannot be identified, said that she was awoken by a rubbing sensation on her breast. On opening her eyes saw Awode lifting his hand from her body. She denied a suggestion by defence counsel that she later told a nurse that she might have been dreaming.

In a garda interview that was read to the court, Awode said he went to the woman's bedroom because someone was coughing, and went to her bedside for a few seconds to check on her and saw she was asleep. Catherine McKeown, who was in charge of all nursing and care staff that night, gave evidence that she was called to the ward shortly after midnight and told of the situation. She said she informed Awode of the accusation and he replied "No, that did not happen".

The jury returned its majority verdict on day-three of the trial having spent four and half hours deliberating. Judge Patricia Ryan revoked Awode's bail and remanded him in custody for sentence on July 7th. She ordered the preparation of a victim impact report for that day.

The woman told Elva Duffy BL, prosecuting, she entered the hospital on a date in November 2013 to have surgery the next day. She was given painkillers and valium for pain relief and to help her get to sleep. Awode was working as a part-time care assistant in her ward and cleaned the toilet in the her room that evening at her request. She went to sleep at about 10.30pm and slept on her left side for some time until she felt rubbing on her right breast, she said. She opened her eyes and the sensation seemed to stop. "Because of where I was, in hospital, you're just not expecting this to be the case, so I closed my eyes again," she said. The sensation resumed when she once again closed her eyes. She then turned over and saw Awode standing by her bed and moving his hand away from her body. "I looked at him. He looked totally stunned and just took off," she said.

A witness, who occupied another bed in the room that night, told Ms Duffy, that as she lay in bed she saw Awode entering and quickly leaving the room twice, before entering a third time and going to the victim's bedside. She said she could only see his legs as there was a curtain partially drawn around the bed, and that he remained at her bedside for two or three minutes before rushing out. "He scurried out of the room and almost immediately (the woman) jumped out of the bed," said the witness. She said the woman "shouted that someone had been at her chest".

Michael Hourigan BL, defending, asked the victim if she told a nurse she may have been dreaming, but she said that she had told the nurse "I wasn't dreaming".

Nurse Trisana Joseph, who was first to meet the woman after the incident, gave evidence that the woman had said she felt she was dreaming when she first felt the sensation, but then woke up when she felt it again. She also said the woman looked stressed and asked if there had been someone in the room. Dr Padraic O'Neill, a retired neurosurgeon, gave evidence that the medication given to the victim would have had no cognitive or sedative effect on her.