

Former Gynecologist Convicted of Luring Women to His Office for Abuse

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A former Manhattan gynecologist who was accused of sexual abuse by dozens of women was convicted on Tuesday of inducing patients to cross state lines for what they believed were routine examinations during which he sexually assaulted them.

The federal charges against Robert A. Hadden, who has not worked as a doctor since 2012, stemmed from assaults against four patients who traveled from and through New Jersey, Nevada and Pennsylvania for gynecological and obstetrics appointments.

Six years ago, Mr. Hadden had admitted to sexual abuse in a state-court plea agreement that allowed him to avoid time behind bars, infuriating scores of women who said he had preyed on them. The conviction on Tuesday was, for some, a measure of justice delayed but finally delivered.

“Today’s verdict does not undo the harm that Hadden and his employers caused hundreds of women and girls over decades,” Marissa Hoechstetter, a victim who has been in court throughout the trial, wrote in an email on Tuesday. “It does send a strong message that what happened was wrong and that survivors’ voices do matter.”

The verdict came at around 12:45 p.m. after about two hours of deliberations. The jury found Mr. Hadden, 64, guilty on all four counts of enticing his former patients into the state to engage in illegal sexual activity.

As the verdict was read, quiet sobs were heard throughout the courtroom from a row of victims that included Evelyn Yang, the wife of the former presidential candidate Andrew Yang. Once the jury was escorted out of the courtroom, Mr. Hadden turned to hug his family and supporters in the first row of the gallery.

Mr. Hadden’s sentencing in U.S. District Court in Manhattan is scheduled for April 25. Each of the four counts carries a maximum of 20 years in prison.

“Robert Hadden was a predator in a white coat,” said Damian Williams, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, in a statement after the verdict. “For years, he cruelly lured women who sought professional medical care to his offices in order to gratify himself.”

Efforts to reach Mr. Hadden’s lawyers were not successful.

Eight women who said Mr. Hadden had abused them gave statements to try to convince Judge Richard M. Berman that Mr. Hadden should be held in jail until his sentencing.

“Every time I have appeared in court, Robert Hadden has continued to manage to live a life at home,” said Laurie Kanyok, who called 911 in 2012 after Mr. Hadden sexually abused her.

Mr. Hadden sat looking straight ahead in the first row of the gallery, with his arm around his wife as the victims spoke.

Deirdre von Dornum, a federal public defender, argued that Mr. Hadden was not a flight risk and is the caretaker for his wife, who has diabetes and neuropathy, and his son, who suffers from cerebral palsy and is autistic.

Judge Berman allowed Mr. Hadden to remain free for now and said he would make a final decision at a hearing next week. Mr. Hadden walked out of the courthouse accompanied by his wife, son and attorneys. He did not speak to reporters.

His federal conviction came more than six years after he pleaded guilty in state court to a single felony count of a criminal sexual act in the third degree and a misdemeanor count of forcible touching. He had been accused by 19 patients of sexual abuse.

The Manhattan district attorney's office, under Cyrus R. Vance Jr. at the time, agreed not to seek prison time for Mr. Hadden and promised not to pursue new sexual abuse allegations against him. Under the agreement, his sex-offender status was to end after 20 years and his name would not be on an online list of offenders.

Columbia University Irving Medical Center and NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, where he was on staff before being indicted on state charges, have in recent years announced two separate settlements with 226 former patients of Mr. Hadden for a total of about \$236 million.

In closing arguments on Monday, Kathryn Wozencroft, another of Mr. Hadden's public defenders, stressed that no one disputed the accounts of sexual assault from the victims who testified.

"No one should go through that," said Ms. Wozencroft, adding that what happened to Mr. Hadden's patients was "disgusting" and "horrible."

Still, Ms. Wozencroft said, the fact that sexual assault occurred during the appointments wasn't enough to convict Mr. Hadden of persuading patients to travel.

"A person cannot induce someone to cross state lines by merely suggesting," she said. Mr. Hadden's wrongdoing was not premeditated, Ms. Wozencroft argued: "It was impulsive and erratic."

However, Jane Kim, an assistant U.S. attorney who gave the government's closing arguments, said Mr. Hadden's pattern of abuse showed it was "planned and pervasive." "Year after year, the defendant abused patient after patient," she said.

In court, arguing for Mr. Hadden to be held in jail until sentencing, his victims explained how his actions had changed their lives

A woman who testified under her first name, Adina, said that she's needed therapy to come to terms with what happened to her, which she fully grasped after she had her fourth child with a different doctor who did not abuse her as Mr. Hadden had.

"Looking at pregnant people is painful for me," she said. "Trust is painful for me. I don't think he deserves another minute of free air. I haven't been able to breathe for 17 years."

After the proceedings ended, victims of Mr. Hadden said they were relieved, but the feeling was tainted by seeing him walk out.

"I wanted to see him taken away in cuffs, and he got to sit and hang with his family," said Dayna Solomon.

If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this article, you can contact Dignity4Patients, whose helpline is open Monday to Thursday 10am to 4pm.