

Nurses say they were forced to assist in abortions

Seth Augenstein Religion News Service | Nov. 15, 2011

NEWARK, N.J. -- Twelve nurses on Monday accused the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey of abruptly forcing them to assist in abortion cases, despite religious and moral objections to the procedures.

"In October, we were suddenly confronted with a choice between our faith and our jobs," said Fe Esperanza Racpan Vinoya, one of the nurses suing University Hospital. "They said very clearly if we did not assist, we would face termination."

The school denies that nurses have been asked to take any direct involvement in abortions or to even be in the room at the time of abortion procedures if they have cultural, ethical or religious objections.

"The university is in full compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and is confident its position will be vindicated when the court gives this matter a full hearing," the school said in a statement.

Twelve of the 16 nurses in the hospital's same-day surgery unit are part of the suit, according to their attorneys, one of whom is from the Arizona-based Christian nonprofit Alliance Defense Fund.

The lawsuit, filed Oct. 31, asks the court to prevent the school from forcing "health care personnel to assist in abortions or in any health service related to abortion." It does not specify exactly what the nurses were asked to do.

"The law said they don't have to assist any part of the (abortion) case," said Matt Bowman, the attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund.

A federal judge granted a temporary restraining order on Nov. 3 stopping all the training, procedures and performances related to abortions for the suing nurses.

Seth Augenstein writes for The Star-Ledger in Newark, N.J.