

DOCTORS OF DESIRE

AN EXAMINER SPECIAL REPORT

Surveys indicate big problem of abuse by psychotherapists

By Scott Winokur
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

NATIONAL SURVEYS have found that male practitioners are involved 85 to 96 percent of the time. While adult heterosexual advances easily predominate, there are child molestations and homosexual seductions as well. It is rarely the case, however, that a female therapist has sex with her male patient.

In some instances, therapists who have forsworn "the pleasures of love with women and men" under the Hippocratic oath demonstrate such perversity and cruelty that it is difficult to believe they ever called themselves "doctor."

Consider Gary C. Aden, M.D., a San Diego psychiatrist said to have liked the sadomasochistic novel, "The Story of O." Aden instructed some of his patients to read this particular piece of pornography and others, according to state licensing records prepared by the attorney general's office.

Aden also ordered them to dispense with underwear, masturbate during phone calls from him, submit to beatings with a riding crop, and allow themselves to be penetrated with foreign objects and branded on their private parts, records show. His patients complied, then complained.

Aden refused to undergo psychiatric examination and lost his license, but was not charged criminally because there were no applicable laws at the time. His former attorney did not respond to requests for an interview and Aden could not be located. He reportedly denied the charges against him when they were made in 1989.

Aden's case is unusual — "absolutely" the worst his prosecutor, Alan Meth, now an administrative law judge, said he'd ever seen.

But it shows that a professional degree is no barrier to extreme misconduct and extreme misconduct no guarantee of severe punishment.



In a story in The Examiner Sunday, Aug. 4, on sexual abuse among psychotherapists, an accompanying photograph misidentified Dr. Gary C. Aden. Aden is correctly pictured in the above photograph. The Examiner regrets the error.

Excerpt

Psychiatrist's former patient tells story of abuse

By Rex Dalton
Staff Writer

The former beauty queen recalls that psychiatrist Gary Carl Aden's hypnotic spell was all-powerful that summer of 1972.

She would walk into his San Diego office, he would touch his finger to his nose and she would drop into a trance — so deep that she permitted him to sexually abuse her, the 42-year-old businesswoman said in describing allegations she took to the state medical board in the past year.

The events occurred about a dozen times during \$40-per-hour therapy sessions, she said, before an incident in which he visited her home.

At Aden's direction, she wore a 1950s-style dress and saddle shoes, bought a special brand of scotch and a riding crop, according to state medical board records of her allegations.

When Aden arrived that Friday night with a black bag, he gave her a hypodermic injection and she drifted into a haze, the woman said. He tied her to a bed with hospital restraints he had brought, then he sexually abused her and beat her with the riding crop, according to the woman and medical board records.

After she recovered, she ceased therapy with Aden. She had sought counseling because of concerns about being a single parent.

She never complained to authorities at the time, she said, because she doubted her story about an established physician would be believed.

"I was embarrassed — that was a long time ago, it wasn't popular to talk," she recalled. "The thing that blew me away was the beating, the shot. I have no idea what was in that shot. That shot could have killed me."

Now, 16 years later, the woman's allegations are part of an accusation filed in June against the medical license of the 53-year-old Aden, who over the intervening years has played a prominent role in psychiatry in the region.

She contacted the state Board of Medical Quality Assurance at the urging of the San Diego Society of Psychiatric Physicians, which learned of her case and investigated it.

Her complaint is included with two other women who have told state authorities of instances between 1973 and 1980 when Aden allegedly had sexual intercourse with them, or physically abused and drugged them.



File photo

Gary Carl Aden Denies allegations

Aden's attorney, David J. Daniels, said his client denies all of the allegations, which will be reviewed in a medical board hearing planned for next June. The hearing is the first step in determining what — if any — action should be taken against Aden's medical license. Penalties include probation, suspension or revocation.

Through his attorney, Aden declined a request for an interview.

The psychiatrist has retired from

medical practice, Danielson said. His Hillcrest office has been closed for about a year, and he has resigned from some professional associations. According to state officials, however, Aden could resume practice by paying his annual medical license fee.

Danielsen described Aden as a brilliant man who had done many drug studies for major pharmaceutical firms and has been widely published. In the 1960s and '70s he was clinical director and chief of staff at Vista Hill Hospital in Chula Vista.

In 1976 Aden made statewide news when he and another physician successfully sued to overturn a state law specifying stringent controls on the use of controversial electroshock therapy.

One of the other sexual misconduct complaints against Aden investigated by the state surfaced initially in a 1982 civil lawsuit by a Chula Vista woman alleging abuse from 1976 to 1978. The woman was too traumatized to deal with it prior to 1982, authorities say.

After several weeks of trial, the lawsuit in San Diego Superior Court was dropped a year ago when the 49-year-old woman accepted a substantial settlement, officials said. Neither she nor her attorney would

discuss it.

In the meantime her complaints were given to the medical board and the attorney general's office, officials noted.

They include allegations that Aden hypnotized her, beat her, brought other men to her house to engage in sexual intercourse with her, and asked her to die for him, court records say.

"Sensational nonsense" and "ludicrous" were words Daniels used in response to such allegations, which he said will be disputed at the administrative hearing.

Also included in documentation given state authorities are tape recordings of telephone conversations between Aden and the Chula Vista woman, which the medical board intends to use during the administrative hearing, according to Alvin J. Korobkin, a supervising deputy in the state attorney general's office in San Diego.

Danielsen said he will argue the tapes are "inadmissible evidence," because they were illegally recorded. The woman patient didn't have Aden's permission to make recordings, thus they are illegal, he said.

The tapes were admitted as evidence in the 1987 civil trial, officials noted.

San Diego Union, January 1, 1989

Psychotherapists having sex with patients may be jailed

Dr. Gary Carl Aden, 53, of La Jolla gave up his medical license effective Sept. 8 after allegations that he had sex with patients, beat them and branded two of the women with beat-metal devices, including an iron

that bore his initials.

While he surrendered his license, Aden did not acknowledge any of the allegations, medical board records say. Aden and his attorney could not be reached yesterday.

San Diego Union
September 27, 1989
(excerpt)

Gary C. Aden, M.D., is President and Co-Founder, the International Psychiatric Association for the Advancement of Electrotherapy and Medical Director San Diego Neuropsychiatric Clinic for Human Relations Center.

Biographical note from
The American Journal of
Social Psychiatry, Fall 1984
(a special issue on electroshock
edited by Gary C. Aden)