Doctor Charged In Patient Deaths To Stand Trial

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — A trial date has been set for an American doctor charged with manslaughter in the deaths of three patients at a rural Australian hospital.

The Queensland state Supreme Court on Friday scheduled Jayant Patel's trial for March 22.

Patel is charged with three counts of manslaughter and two counts of grievous bodily harm. The charges relate to his job as director of surgery between 2003 and 2005 at a state-run hospital in Bundaberg, 230 miles north of Brisbane in Queensland. He has not entered a plea and faces life in prison if convicted.

Prosecutors in Australia say Patel showed a pattern of negligence by performing surgeries he'd been banned from undertaking in the United States, misdiagnosing patients and using sloppy surgical techniques.

In 1984, Patel was fined by New York state health officials and placed on probation for three years for failing to examine patients before surgery.

He later worked at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Portland, Ore. In 1998 — after reviewing 79 complaints about Patel — Kaiser restricted his practice. Patel left the hospital in 2001 after the Oregon Board of Medical Examiners cited him for "gross or repeated acts of negligence."

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