Surgeon Convicted Of Negligence In The Death Of Patient

Spanish doctor sentenced for death of Nigeria's former first lady

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MADRID (AP) — A plastic surgeon in Spain was convicted of negligence in the death of Nigeria's former first lady and was given a suspended sentence of a year in jail, a court said Tuesday.

Stella Obasanjo, wife of then President Olusegun Obasanjo, died Oct. 23, 2005, two days after undergoing liposuction on her abdomen and other parts of her body at a clinic in the southern town of Marbella.

A court in nearby Malaga convicted plastic surgeon Antonio Mena Molina of negligent homicide. The sentence was issued Monday and Mena was also barred from practicing medicine for three years and ordered to pay euro120,000 ($175,000) in damages to the woman's son. The sentence said Mena Molina had shown "carelessness and neglect."

The doctor can appeal the sentence, but it is suspended because he has no prior criminal record. Under Spanish law, people convicted of first offenses with jail terms of less than two years automatically have those sentences suspended.

In the trial in July, the court heard that a tube used to remove fat was placed by mistake in the patient's abdominal cavity. It punctured her colon and cut into her liver.

While recuperating from the operation, Obasanjo's blood pressure dropped and she began to bleed profusely, the sentence said.

Nurses tending to her were initially unable to contact Mena Molina because he had his mobile telephone turned off. The surgeon saw the patient Oct. 22 and changed her bandages. However, even though Obasanjo's condition "deteriorated clearly and evidently," she was not taken to a Marbella hospital until the early hours of Oct. 23, and even then was transported in the back seat of Mena Molina's car, not an ambulance.

An autopsy showed she died from injuries to the colon and liver.

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