

Brain surgery patient left in OR after doc no-show

10 May 2009, By FRANK ELTMAN , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- One of the highest-paid doctors in New York refused to perform brain surgery on an already-anesthetized patient whose scheduled surgeon had failed to show up, and the state health department is investigating.

The surgeon who refused, Dr. Thomas Milhorat, is retiring as chairman of neurosurgery at North Shore University Hospital-Long Island Jewish Medical Center, the hospital said Friday in a statement.

The hospital suspended his and Dr. Paolo Bolognese's clinical practice privileges for two weeks after the cancellation of the April 10 surgery. The hospital said the 73-year-old Milhorat had already been considering retirement and will continue academic and research activities.

The suspensions expired this week, but neither Milhorat nor Bolognese have commented because they are attending a medical conference in Italy. Neither physician has responded to an e-mail request for comment.

Claire Pospisil, a spokeswoman for the state Health Department, confirmed the situation was being investigated.

The unidentified patient was under anesthesia, head shaved, but the 48-year-old Bolognese could not be found, the Daily News of New York reported on Wednesday, citing sources it did not identify.

Staffers contacted Milhorat, who refused to do the surgery because the woman was not his patient. A North Shore spokesman said the woman later had successful surgery.

Crain's New York, a leading business publication, identified Milhorat and Bolognese as among the New York City area's top medical earners in 2007, with Milhorat taking in \$7.2 million and Bolognese earning \$2.4 million.

They help run North Shore's Chiari Institute, which draws patients worldwide who have a rare congenital brain defect that can cause headaches, dizziness and other pain. It wasn't clear whether the woman whose [surgery](#) was canceled had the condition.

Dr. Lawrence Smith, chief medical officer for the North Shore-LIJ Health System, said in a statement that Milhorat "is widely regarded as one of the world's foremost experts on Chiari malformation, and his surgical expertise has benefitted thousands of patients around the world."

Milhorat joined the North Shore-LIJ Health System in 2002 and has been practicing medicine since 1961.

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