

JERSEY HOSPITAL HAILS INDICTMENT

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Director Views Case Against
Surgeon as Vindication of
Medical Profession

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By FRANK J. PRIAL

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ORADELL, N.J., May 19—The executive director of Riverdell Hospital here, where Dr. Mario E. Jascavevich allegedly murdered three patients while serving as chief of surgery 10 years ago, hailed the physician's indictment on murder charges as a vindication for the hospital and for the medical profession.

"The people of the community should be extremely proud of the fact that it was the board of directors of this hospital that first brought this problem to the authorities," said the director, Sebastian L. Suriani.

Mr. Suriani, who has been at Riverdell only two years, said the fact that the case had languished for a decade was not the fault of the hospital, but of the Prosecutors. "If the legal profession didn't do anything, there was nothing we could do in the medical profession," he said.

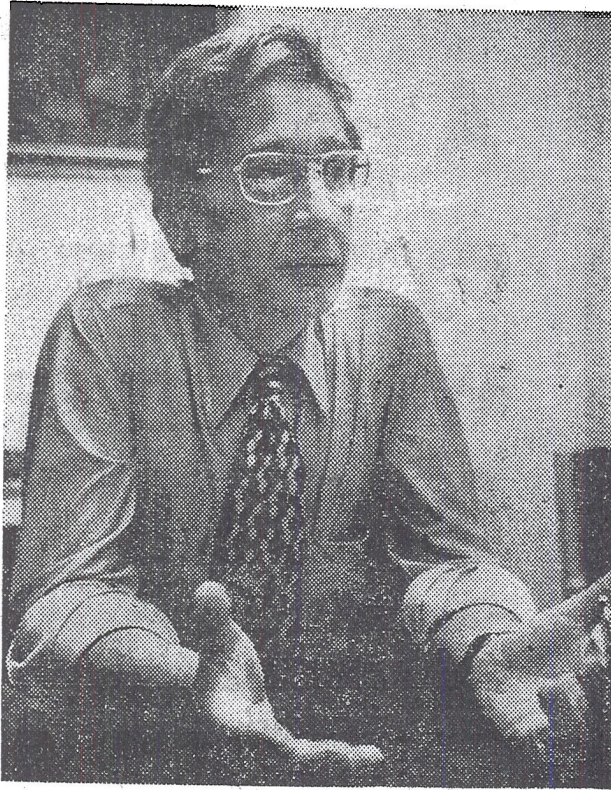
"The medical community doesn't hide things under the rug," Mr. Suriani said. "We tell it like it is. There has been a decided lack of confidence in the medical community of late. I hope this will serve to restore some of that confidence."

The hospital director disclosed that Riverdell had suffered from the disclosures of Dr. Jascavevich's alleged activities there. "We had a rough three months," he said, "beginning in January, when these stories first came out, but everything is pretty much back to normal now."

Mr. Suriani said that Riverdell's occupancy rate yesterday was 90.1 percent. The one-story, unobtrusive brick building at 576 Kinderkamack Road has 81 beds.

Dr. Jascavevich's practice suffered none of the downtown that hit the hospital in the wake of the first disclosures of the alleged murders. "The people still line up on [his] porch during office hours," said Donald Leshnik, manager of a surgical supply store across the street from Dr. Jascavevich's office at 435 60th Street in West New York.

"I'd have to say his practice is still as heavy as ever," Mr. Leshnik said. "We still fill a lot of prescriptions for him."



The New York Times/Larry Morris

Sebastian L. Suriani, executive director of Riverdell Hospital in Oradell, N.J., discussing the indictment.

Doorbell Unanswered

No one answered the doorbell at the doctor's office yesterday, but several neighbors spoke of him.

"He was a very good man, very good to his patients," said Maria Myer, a dental assistant who works in a building next door. Mrs. Myer said she talked to Dr. Jascavevich last week.

"He told me he was sure he would be vindicated," she said.

Dr. Joseph Timmes, director of surgery at Jersey City Medical Center, where Dr. Jascavevich has been an attending staff surgeon for many years, said, in the wake of the indictment:

"He will continue on the staff as long as his license is not revoked. And he will continue to operate, of course. Unless the board of managers of the Jersey City Medical Center tells me differently.

"To us, he's just another guy. He's a good technical surgeon."

Dr. Timmes said his personal reaction to the charges in the indictment was incredulity.

"I can't believe it," he said. "I can't imagine this fellow doing anything like this."

At Christ Hospital in Jersey City, where Dr. Jascavevich has been an attending surgeon since 1960, a spokesman expressed surprise at the charges in the indictment, but said no immediate steps against the physician were planned. The hospital had attempted to revoke his privileges there soon after the allegations involving Dr. Jascavevich were disclosed in January. That attempt was stopped when he threatened legal countermeasures.

Dr. Jascavevich, his wife, who is a piano teacher, and their two children, one of whom was adopted in South America, live in a split-level home at 10 Priscilla Lane in a relatively new section of Englewood Cliffs. Yesterday, shades were drawn at the home and, although a child appeared at a window, no one answered the doorbell.

A woman who answered the door at 14 Priscilla Lane declined to discuss her neighbors other than to note that Dr. Jascavevich had "only been indicted."

"He will have his day in court," she added.