

Suicide machine unethical, prosecutor says

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Two physicians — as well as prosecutor Richard Thompson himself — may testify today as the civil trial to bar the use of the Dr. Jack Kevorkian's suicide machine continues in Oakland Circuit Court.

The physicians will testify that Kevorkian, a retired Royal Oak pathologist acted contrary to professional medical ethics and standards last June by helping a victim of advanced Alzheimer's disease to use his machine to end her life, according to Michael Modelski, the Oakland County assistant prosecutor.

Modelski contends the existing court order banning Kevorkian from

again using his suicide machine should be made permanent until the state legislature clarifies the criminality of assisting suicides.

Defense lawyer Geoffrey N. Fieger said he may call the prosecutor as a witness to show he "is attempting to impose his peculiar and warped views upon the citizens of Michigan" by continuing his civil action against Kevorkian.

There is no law prohibiting the use of Kevorkian's suicide machine, Fieger said. In the absence of legal precedent the prosecutor is acting on his own personal convictions and moral beliefs, he asserted.

Both men summarized their arguments Friday at the civil proceed-

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Kevorkian's defense lawyer

ings started before Judge Alice L. Gilbert.

MODELSKI CONCEDES there is no existing state law making assisted suicides criminal — a point established when a district judge dis-

missed murder charges against Kevorkian on Dec. 13.

But the civil proceedings against Kevorkian are entirely different than the criminal charges that were dismissed, Modelski said.

"We intend to show that Kevorkian's actions were entirely contrary to medical standards and that he shouldn't be allowed to use his machine again," he said. "The state has an interest in protecting life."

PERHAPS THE main witness Friday was a psychiatrist who testified that Dr. Mary Ann Atkins, the 94-year-old Portland, Ore., woman who took her life with Kevorkian's machine June 4, was not necessarily facing a bleak and hopeless life as an Alzheimer's victim.

Atkins "had three or four more years" before Adkins' would rob her of all her mental faculties and eventually lead to her dying of pneumonia, testified Dr. Murray A. Raskind, a professor and vice chairman for research development at the University of Washington.

Raskind said he personally believes somebody terminally ill should have the option of ending his or her life. But based on his knowledge of Atkins, Raskind said he didn't believe she had the mental competence to make an "informed decision" about ending her own life. Kevorkian contends Atkins knew she had an incurable disease that would eventually lead to a lingering and unidentified death. He further contends that with the full knowledge and approval of her family, Atkins made an informed decision about taking her own life.

Although that treatment wasn't

successful, Raskind said he did not consider Atkins to be terminally ill. "When I heard (during a phone conversation with Kevorkian) she was considering suicide, I told him (Kevorkian) that she was not terminally ill" and thus not a good candidate for his machine.

Raskind and he had not seen or examined Atkins for several months prior to her death, and thus had no first-hand knowledge about her medical condition when she took her life.

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Wanting peace, Egypt fears war

By Pat Murphy
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Egyptians are hoping for peace, but seem resigned to the inevitability of war in the Persian Gulf, according to a Catholic, Jew and Muslim who returned from Cairo Monday.

Professionals, shop keepers and taxi drivers hope 11th-hour diplomacy will avert hostilities, but they also

believe the United States and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein are on a collision course, said Marian Koledo, Ezra Shaya and Mohamed Gazayer.

The trio, a surgery team from

Madison Community Hospital, spent about two weeks in Egypt teaching laparoscopic laser cholecystectomy, a revolutionary technique for removing gall bladders.

The technique is to gall bladder

surgery what arthroscopic surgery is to the repair of knee injuries.

The trip was hectic, with the trio removing nearly a dozen gall bladders, demonstrating the technique to eight physicians — mostly medical school faculty members — and four nurses.

The MEDICAL community, as might be expected, was warm and hospitable. Treating the trio with professional courtesy, "They were enthusiastic about the technique we demonstrated and about us as Americans," said Dr. Gazayer, a surgeon who lives in Birmingham.

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Dr. Shaya, also a surgeon, agreed. "I grew up in Baghdad," said Shaya, who came to the United States in 1925. "Egypt reminds me of my boyhood. The people were friendly, even when they learned I am Jewish."

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