

Woman Continues Emotional Testimony In Doctor Rape Trial

Accuser Testifies In Doctor's Sex Assault Trial

By CHRISTINE DEMPSEY, The Hartford Courant

A woman who said she was raped by her doctor in his East Hartford exam room broke down on the witness stand Tuesday as a defense attorney worked to chip away at her credibility.

Attorney Norman Pattis continued his cross examination of the woman during the second day of the trial of Edwin Njoku. Through his questioning, Pattis painted a picture of an accuser who is suicidal, schizophrenic and has experienced hallucinations.

He also strongly suggested that the woman consented to sex.

When he asked the woman, "Did you rub against him?" she said no.

When he asked if she remembered what the doctor said after the incident, the woman said yes in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter.

But the woman broke down and the judge called for a break.

She did not return to the stand to answer the question. But according to a police report, the woman told an officer that Njoku said to her "You weren't looking for this?"

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On Monday's first day, the accuser described through tears from the witness stand, how Njoku raped her on an examining table at his East Hartford office in 2011.

The woman, who testified on the opening day of Njoku's trial in Superior Court, paused to compose herself before answering graphic questions about the attack. "I'm sorry, I have to ask these questions," prosecutor Vicki Melchiorre said.

Njoku is charged with first-degree sexual assault, fourth-degree sexual assault and tampering with a witness.

He is on trial for those charges involving Monday's witness, but he has been accused of sexually assaulting multiple women. Trials in the other cases are pending.

Njoku has maintained his innocence and, in October 2012, rejected a plea bargain offer, saying he wanted to go to trial.

On Monday, the witness said she went to Njoku's office on Oct. 22, 2011, to pick up her medical records for her attorney in a slip-and-fall

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case. Njoku, her doctor since 2008, greeted her and pointed her to an exam room.

She testified that Njoku started by examining her neck and back, but then grabbed her breast. He asked her to lie down on the exam table and held her down with his left hand. He undid her jeans with his free hand and pushed them to her knees.

"The only thing I did was close my eyes," she said.

When it was over, she got dressed and used a back door to leave because the front door was locked. While waiting at a nearby bus stop, Njoku came out of the office and called her to come back.

She did not return to the office and, instead, boarded a bus to Hartford where she lived with her parents. After some prodding by her mother, the witness said she revealed what the doctor had done and then called 911.

Njoku's defense attorney, Norm Pattis, challenged her by asking how the assault she had described was possible. He punctuated his line of questioning by sitting on the prosecutor's desk and throwing his legs in the air.

He asked if the jeans had ripped. The witness said they hadn't. Pattis will continue to cross-examine her Tuesday.

The only other witness to testify before the jury Monday was an East Hartford police officer who spoke with the witness at Hartford Hospital after the alleged assault.

Officer David Choquette said she appeared distraught.

The witness had testified, outside the presence of the jury, about a rape allegation she made in 1997 against a middle school classmate. Pattis asked Judge Elpedio N. Vitale to allow that testimony into evidence. He pointed out that the witness initially said she had consensual sex with the boy and later said she had been raped.

Pattis' request was denied, along with a separate request to question claims of sexual assault she had made against other men.

Vitale also denied a motion by the prosecutor to have an expert witness testify about the woman's mental limitations. She cannot read or write and has a low IQ.

Njoku was first charged Jan. 31, 2012, with sexually assaulting the witness and one other woman. Once news of his arrest was made public, more women reported to police that they had been sexually assaulted during office visits.

In April 2012, he was charged with sexually assaulting three more women. His medical license has been revoked. ■