

To the judges of the Anthony Shadid Award for Journalism Ethics:

Name and contact information of the nominators and their relationship to the story

Emily Hoerner, ehoerner@chicagotribune.com, [REDACTED] co-author

Names and emails of the reporter or reporting team that produced the report

Lisa Schencker, health care reporter, lschencker@chicagotribune.com

Emily Hoerner, investigative reporter, ehoerner@chicagotribune.com

Stacey Wescott, photographer, swescott@chicagotribune.com

Brief description of the story and a link to it online. If you are submitting a series longer than two installments, please highlight the two that you want to get the closest consideration. We will take into account the whole series.

“Medical Misconduct” is an investigative series exposing how Illinois health care systems failed to protect patients from sexual abuse and how state government failed to hold them responsible.

Part 1: [Patients reported sexual abuse by medical providers. Health care systems let them keep working.](#)

Part 2: [Flawed state oversight lets doctors accused of abuse continue to see patients](#)

Part 3: [Former patients of Fabio Ortega say Endeavor Health failed to protect them from an abusive doctor](#)

Part 4: [Chaperones may offer one solution to sexual abuse of patients by medical providers](#)

Follow-up: [Attorneys call on AG's office to criminally investigate former doctor Fabio Ortega and health systems where he worked](#)

Follow-up: [Another 26 women sue Endeavor Health and gynecologist Fabio Ortega, convicted of sexual abuse](#)

Follow-up: [More Illinois health care facilities would have to report patient abuse under new bill](#)

Follow-up: [Illinois lawmakers pass bill to expand reporting of sexual abuse in health care settings following Tribune investigation](#)

Follow-up: [Endeavor Health is spending up to \\$453 million to settle patients' claims that a former doctor sexually abused them](#)

Follow up: [Criminally charged health care providers keep working unrestricted as state action lags](#)



Description of conflicting values encountered in reporting the story. Options considered to resolve the conflicts. Final decisions and rationales behind them

After gynecologist and obstetrician Fabio Ortega was charged with sexually abusing two patients, a chorus of other women came forward to allege he had also abused them during

appointments. Chicago Tribune health care reporter Lisa Schencker and investigative reporter Emily Hoerner wanted to know: What role did his employer Endeavor Health play in enabling what survivors contended was a decades-long history of misconduct?

As reporters learned more about Endeavor Health's role in allowing Ortega continued unsupervised access to patients, they expanded their focus to pursue a larger story about the health care industry and its handling of patient sexual abuse, especially in cases that don't grow into headline-grabbing scandals. The resulting series, "Medical Misconduct," identified multiple other well-known Illinois health systems that had also fielded allegations of sexual abuse but allowed those physicians, nurses and other workers to continue caring for patients unsupervised.

Schencker and Hoerner from the outset had to weigh and make tough ethical decisions as they uncovered the information in this investigation.

About a year and a half before the series was published, the reporters began speaking with some of Ortega's former patients. These conversations occurred before reporters knew the scope of the story would include other health care providers, health systems and patients. Although Schencker and Hoerner took care to be open and honest about the reporting process with the survivors and to temper expectations about when a story might be published about Endeavor Health's handling of patient accusations involving Ortega, it was undoubtedly difficult for the survivors to wait for publication.

Throughout the reporting process, the reporters continually weighed the emotional harm to the survivors of waiting to publish the story about Ortega against the benefits of waiting until they could publish a more complete, comprehensive report that they hoped would lead to serious change statewide.

Ultimately, the reporters and editors determined they would hold the story, with the goal of publishing it as part of a series that would have more impact, holding both health care systems and state government accountable.

The decision to hold the piece, which ultimately became part three of the series, came with other complications. The reporters worked to keep lines of communication open with the survivors from that story and made changes to the story drafts when necessary. As the reporting continued over months, some of the survivors agreed to settlements in their lawsuits. When writing the stories, reporters worked hard to ensure they were not putting their sources in a position that could compromise the terms of their settlements.

On several occasions during the reporting of the series, reporters had to weigh sexual abuse survivors' requests for anonymity and the impact that the use of anonymous sources may have on readers' interest and trust in a story. The reporters strongly believed that participation by survivors had to be on their own terms to prevent further harm. Whenever possible, reporters and their editors chose to grant anonymity to sexual abuse survivors who requested it. They

also worked with photographer Stacey Wescott to craft images for the series that also respected the privacy of the sources.

In some cases, reporters had multiple conversations with sources to ensure they fully understood the potential implications of sharing their experiences publicly, whether anonymously or by name. In one instance, reporters decided not to include a potential source because there was no formal documentation of her allegations and they could not reach her for follow-up conversations.

Naming doctors and other health care professionals also occasionally posed challenges. In one instance, a medical professional who had been found guilty of a crime against a patient attempted to persuade reporters not to use his name, citing the impact the article could have on his life and family. Reporters discussed the situation at length, weighing the risk to the professional versus the risk to the public if the information remained largely hidden from public view, as had been the case. Reporters decided it was in the public's interest to name him.

Reporters also faced legal threats from one health care professional, forcing them to weigh the public's right to know against potential litigation against the Tribune. Reporters knew their facts were correct and were based on public documents that named the health care professional, and the Tribune proceeded despite the lawsuit threats.

For their sensitive and informed ethical decisions while pursuing an investigation involving sexual abuse of patients by health care providers, we respectfully nominate Schencker and Hoerner for the Anthony Shadid Award of Journalism Ethics.