

Wednesday, 09/19/07

Doctor on trial in woman's death

Lawyer describes relationship as sex, drugs, money

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FRANKLIN — The relationship between a plastic surgeon accused of murder and his artist/model girlfriend revolved around sex, drugs and money, a defense attorney said during opening statements of trial that began Tuesday.

Dr. Christ Koulis is charged with second-degree murder and reckless homicide in the death of Lesa Buchanan.

Prosecutors said she died from an overdose of drugs Koulis gave her and possibly injected into her during a "marathon sex weekend." The charges are based on a state law that allows prosecutors to charge a person with murder if he or she provides controlled drugs that cause a death.

Buchanan, 35, died on July 4, 2005, after police and emergency medical crews responded to a 911 call at her Cool Springs apartment. Koulis made the call, telling dispatchers that Buchanan was unresponsive and wasn't breathing. He said he attempted CPR until paramedics arrived.

Assistant District Attorney General Kim Helper told the jury that Koulis, who turns 40 today, injected Buchanan with a mix of Oxycodone and acetaminophen. Helper said Buchanan had fresh "stick marks" around her groin. She told jurors that they would see videos of the couple's sex acts and drug use.

Defense attorney David Raybin said there is "no evidence" that Koulis gave Buchanan drugs. He said it's a case of two adults using each other.

"She was a good looking lady who got augmentations with Dr. Koulis to look better," Raybin said. "He paid for her apartment, computer, car and ring. She used him for money and services. He used her for sex. She used him for sex... sometimes for hours on end. It was a fair exchange, ladies and gentlemen."

Raybin called Buchanan a drug addict and said she procured her own pharmaceuticals by "pill shopping and doctor shopping." He said Buchanan died from clots in her bloodstream caused by injecting Oxycodone pills meant to be swallowed.

After months of crushing the pills into water and injecting the narcotic, the process led to cardiac arrest, Raybin said.

Prosecutors played the 911 call Koulis made, then put a police officer and the EMS supervisor who responded to the apartment on the stand. Both testified that Koulis seemed "panicked" at the scene and did not tell them Buchanan was an intravenous drug user.

Dr. Steven Ragle, an emergency room physician at Williamson Medical Center, also testified. Ragle said he treated Buchanan and the needle marks around her groin were aligned in such a way that it appeared they "were placed by someone who knew the anatomy of the area."

The trial is expected to last more than two weeks, according to the Williamson County Circuit Court Clerk's Office.