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HEADLINE: SCANDAL ROCKS DOCS. Married head of surgery's tryst leads to suit over firing. From sex affair to bitter battle at Maimonides Medical Center

BYLINE: BY SCOTT SHIFREL DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

BODY:

"GREY'S ANATOMY" has nothing on Brooklyn's Maimonides Medical Center.

A torrid affair between the married head of surgery and a beautiful doctor has spilled into a nasty court fight featuring broken promises, a DUMBO love nest and sex harassment charges.

Dr. Petra Rietschel, a striking 38-year-old redhead from Germany who had a two-year affair with Dr. Patrick Borgen, 51, claims in court papers she was fired because she dumped him.

"We had a relationship," Rietschel told the Daily News yesterday. "He was married, but he said he was getting a divorce. He said they hadn't been intimate in 10 years, that they hadn't been a couple.

"He said I was the woman he had always dreamed of. We worked very close together. We built the breast cancer program together. He is the king of the place, and I was very impressed with him."

Rietschel, a single mom with a young son, said she met Borgen in 2006, when both began at Maimonides. They started the affair in 2007, she said.

He told her he would help her "build my career" and she believed the father of four with a home in Connecticut was filing for a divorce.

They went to the hospital galas together, medical conferences in Hawaii and even his native New Orleans, where he introduced her to his mother, Rietschel said.

She started becoming suspicious when he sometimes didn't return phone calls. They bickered. It came to a head in his DUMBO apartment on Dec. 19, 2008. That's when she spotted an incriminating e-mail, Rietschel said in her suit, filed last week in Brooklyn Supreme Court.

"He was sleeping and that's when I saw the e-mail," Rietschel told The News. "I was horrified."

The suit says he'd written to his wife and indicated he was going to end the affair by getting Rietschel a new job outside of Brooklyn "ASAP."

"When he woke up I showed it to him and he just denied it and said, 'I'm lying to my wife,' " Rietschel said. "I wouldn't hear of it. I walked out on him."

Borgen repeatedly text-messaged her to come back, Rietschel said. "He's a very charismatic man. I had come back before, but this time I didn't respond."

That, she said, led to big problems at work. She said he started yelling at her and putting her down verbally.

Then, on Feb. 24 of this year, Rietschel said she was called into a supervisor's office with the head of human resources and was told she had to go.

"They just said for both parties it would be better to leave right away," she said. "They said there were multiple issues. They were very vague, but everybody knew what it was about."

"She was humiliated in front of everyone," said Rietschel's lawyer Derek Smith. "This is a classic textbook case of harassment - when your job is linked in any way to sex and a boss."

Borgen does not deny the affair, but says he broke up with her. He also said he was not Rietschel's supervisor and had no idea she was being fired until an hour before it happened.

"She didn't report to me," he told The News. "I don't know what she's talking about. We were in two different departments. I'm in surgery. She's in oncology."

"This is definitely not true . . . We had a very public and consensual relationship . . . there was never a professional relationship," he said.

"I don't think any breakups are good, but I just don't know what this is about. I stopped the relationship. . . . My divorce is about to be finalized. I've been going through a long drawn-out divorce. I was not informed about this [suit]."

Hospital officials could not be reached last night, a spokeswoman said.

Rietschel landed on her feet, getting a job as an assistant professor at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Montefiore Medical Center. She said she had to take the first job that came her way and misses her old job and her former patients.

"What I do is more than a profession, it's my passion," she said. "It crushed my world."

"It completely ruined my self-esteem. This was deep. This was not just a sexual affair. I loved him - of course, I loved him. I don't think very highly of him anymore."

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Graphic:

Dr. Patrick Borgen Age: 51

Current job: Known as one of the most skilled and innovative breast cancer surgeons in the country, he is chairman of the Department of Surgery at Maimonides

Medical Center.

Old job: Surgeon at Memorial Sloan-Kettering.

Claim to fame: Credited with discovering a gene that indicates higher cancer risk and may be screened for with a simple blood test. He also developed a procedure that is now the standard for breast cancer diagnosis.

Dr. Petra Rietschel

Age: 38

Current job: Assistant professor, Albert Einstein College of
Medicine.

Old job: She began as an attending physician specializing in breast cancer at Maimonides in July 2006. Fired in February 2009. Prior to that, she had fellowships in oncology and hematology at

Memorial Sloan-Kettering.

Credo: "I want to get close to my patients. I tell them about my life and I want to hear about their life."

GRAPHIC: GRAPHIC;INFOGRAPHIC, Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn Dr. Patrick Borgen, chairman of the surgery department at Maimonides Medical Center, poses with Dr. Petra Rietschel while in Hawaii. In Yellowstone National Park On vacation at Mount Rushmore

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