

Doctor guilty of leaking patient info

by UPI

NARA, Japan -- A Japanese psychiatrist accused of leaking medical records to a journalist is guilty of breaking confidentiality laws, a court says.

Morimitsu Sakihama, 51, was sentenced to four months in prison and suspended for three years by the Nara District Court Wednesday after judges determined he leaked the records of a teenager who torched his home last year, leading to the deaths of his stepmother and two siblings, Japan's Kyodo News reported.

It was the first decision by a Japanese court on the subject of unlawful disclosure of confidential information since such data became available in 1978. The case stirred a national debate on the value of free speech, the news agency said.

Prosecutors said Sakihama, who conducted a psychiatric evaluation on the teenager, showed a copy of the test results to the journalist. Sakihama's attorneys claimed he is not the type of doctor subject to confidentiality obligations because the evaluation he conducted was not intended to cure the teenager, Kyodo reported.

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