

Center for low-carbohydrate diet closes

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NEW YORK (AP) The Atkins Center for Complementary Medicine has closed its doors, six months after low-carbohydrate diet guru Dr. Robert C. Atkins died at age 72.

The center was shuttered on Oct. 15, and patients were notified two weeks earlier.

Dr. Keith Berkowitz, a specialist in internal medicine and the center's acting director, announced Wednesday that he would open his own practice later this month that would continue Atkins's philosophy for good health.

Atkins died after suffering a severe head injury from a fall on an icy Manhattan sidewalk while walking to work April 17.

Richard Rothstein, a spokesman for the center, said Wednesday that state law required that the center _ which operated as Atkins' medical practice be sold or closed six months after his death.

Thousands of the center's patients were notified on Oct. 3 of the closing and provided a list of doctors to which they could go for continued treatment, he said.

Berkowitz said he decided to open his own practice after receiving hundreds of calls from Atkins patients wanting to continue their treatment. His office was scheduled to open on Oct. 28, at another Manhattan location and a new name, still to be determined, he said.

Dr. John Salerno, a family practitioner at the Atkins center, would join Berkowitz in the new practice, he said.

In addition to treating patients interested in weight loss, the Atkins center, founded in 1960, also provided comprehensive medical treatment for diabetes and cardiovascular ailments.

Atkins' best-selling low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet has sold 15 million copies worldwide. The medical establishment had generally viewed his unorthodox weight-loss plan which emphasizes meat, eggs and cheese and discourages bread, rice and fruit - with scorn. However, several recent studies have shown that people on the diet lost weight without compromising their health.