

SUSPENSION OF DR RAJ MATTU

Senior Consultants and Nurses warned of patient safety being put at risk by the Management's policies, e.g. overcrowding 5 patients into bays, designed and equipped for 4. They submitted 150 separate serious clinical incident report forms, that warned about near misses and deaths related to this overcrowding Policy. The Senior Management ignored the warnings of the clinical staff.

The Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) and news reports criticised University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust for dangerous practices that were causing deficiencies in quality of care and high death rates. The CHI forced the Management to stop the overcrowding.

The CHI also warned of a fear culture within the Trust where consultants were afraid to speak out about patient safety and care because of victimisation by senior management.

A 'cover up' by the Trust Management has now been discovered, where they have deliberately misled the public and the authorities about many issues. This includes their false claims on the BBC (25th September 2001) that no harm or deaths had occurred from overcrowding.

Despite intimidation from the senior managers, leading heart specialist, Dr Raj Mattu, has bravely spoken out for us, the people of Coventry. This included him describing deaths that he had witnessed due to overcrowding on BBC TV, on 29th September 2001.

Senior Managers and members of the Trust Board openly declared intentions to get rid of Dr Mattu and four other consultants who had similarly raised concerns. There has been a vindictive smear campaign against Dr Mattu, with many malicious allegations. NHS staff, and others, have been approached and urged to make complaints against Dr Mattu and even to use a private detective on him to help generate complaints.

At an estimated cost to the tax payer of over £500,000, this Trust had recently suspend another Consultant, Mr Barros D'Sa, for 20 months on allegations of bullying, after he had raised concerns about increased deaths following gut surgery. The Senior Management was forced to reinstate him after the Trust lost High Court and Appeal Court hearings.

The Trust deployed this same tactic again on 21st February 2002, using dubious allegations of bullying a junior doctor in order to suspend Dr Mattu.

The poor integrity of this junior doctor is highlighted by the facts that he admitted that he was to receive a large discretionary payment of about £15,000 from the senior managers just before he left the Trust, was promoted to Cardiff by allegedly using a fraudulent CV just 5 weeks after making the allegation (31st March 2002), and that he was later (August 2002) caught having run off with and stolen Dr Mattu's computer worth over £1800.

The Trust's reliance upon an unreliable allegation by an untrustworthy junior doctor, who is without credibility, reinforces the fact that the suspension continues the Management's effort to victimise Dr Mattu for speaking out on Health and Safety issues at the Hospital on behalf of us, the local people.

The Trust has then conducted a highly biased and flawed investigation, violating Trust and NHS Policies and Procedures, to suit the desired outcome for victimisation by the Trust.

The suspension was under Policy #16 and then the policy is not followed through. Similarly, National Health Service Procedures (HSG(94)49) are not followed. During this investigation, the Trust has denied Dr Mattu the right to personally rebut the allegations by never completing an interview with him. They have also only interviewed about half of the witnesses put forward.

Of those witnesses that were interviewed, over 90% have formally complained that the Trust has tampered with their evidence in a manner that is consistently prejudicial to Dr Mattu, when the Trust produced witness summaries for the investigation.

The Trust has then made false claims that an independent 3 person panel was agreed by all parties to determine the facts, knowing that the panel comprised a senior Trust Board Executive and her husband's former boss, and that Dr Mattu and his advisors had not agreed this panel.

The credibility of this bogus Panel, which was falsely constituted under Policy #16, is under further suspicion because the panel was not given the authority to fully investigate the issue, other than just to look at the records and notes selectively produced by the Trust to make their decision. The panel was given NO investigative powers or facility to interview a single witness and therefore could not test the evidence or determine any facts for itself. The Trust also refused to allow Dr Mattu and his advisors to appear before the panel to present a defence.

On 3rd July 2003 Dr Peter Mulrooney, elected leader of the senior consultants, resigned from the Trust, citing the intimidatory Management and its conspiracy to get rid of Dr Mattu as his primary reasons. He added "*Dr Mattu has been treated abominably. I believe that there has been a concerted campaign by some senior managers to get rid of him*", and he accused the Trust of inventing procedures to suit their desired outcome for Dr Mattu and his continued victimisation. He declared that he "*had a catalogue of complaints regarding discrepancies in Dr Mattu's case and the issues surrounding it*", and he criticised the Trust Management for failing to follow due process, whereby the investigation of Dr Mattu is "*unsound*".

Dr Mulrooney also raised concerns about the Trust Management cover up of deaths related to overcrowding. He accused the Trust of failing to investigate this matter properly or to act on the serious concerns raised by Dr Mattu about patient safety. He claimed that the Trust were displeased with Dr Mattu for speaking out on our behalf about patient safety, and that this "*may have contributed to the desire to oust him*".

On 10th July 2003 Dr David Buckley, GP Tutor South Warwickshire, protested publicly about the Trust tampering with and distorting his evidence to the investigation into Dr Mattu, in a manner that was harmful and prejudicial to Dr Mattu. He formally protested to the Trust, but they ignored him and continued violating procedures. Due to the Trust's constant failure to follow due process, he stated, "*as far as I am concerned, that makes the whole investigation null and void*".

Dr Buckley advised, "*Dr Mattu was suspended because he dared to speak out about bad practice*" and he added "*Other doctors are living in fear of speaking out*". Dr Buckley warned that racial discrimination was also underlying the injustice that Dr Mattu has faced "*I believe he was suspended because of his views and maybe his race*". During the last 5 years there have been over 15 formal complaints of bullying against consultants. Only 2 (including Dr Mattu) have been against non-whites and they are the ONLY consultants suspended by this Trust. Coincidence?

Although the public does not have any right to know about any individual case, it is very important for a "Public Body" to be fair and transparent when it comes to policies and procedures. Dr Mattu has suffered suspension for more than 18 months and the longer the issue drags on, the more harm it causes him, the community remains deprived of his considerable skills and the more costly it becomes for the public purse.

Dr Mattu courageously spoke out for the people of Coventry & Warwickshire, for which the Management has persecuted him for over 3 years. He now needs **YOUR** support to speak out for him, and request that Dr Mattu's punishment is ended immediately. We call for immediate reinstatement, and that the investigation be conducted outside the Trust at a truly independent forum. The Management continues the fear culture and persecution of senior clinical staff and cannot be trusted to ensure justice and fair treatment for Dr Mattu, who continues to suffer blatant discrimination. This matter now needs to be concluded urgently to restore decency, fairness and justice, and to minimise further unnecessary expenditure of public money