
NHS spent £6m on suspending heart consultant whistleblower

An NHS hospital has spent £6 million on suspending a heart consultant who blew the whistle on high death rates, it has been claimed.

By Nick Britten

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Dr Raj Mattu last worked in 2002 after claiming that fatalities among heart patients in Coventry were too high because of overcrowding.

After speaking out publicly on patient safety issues, he found himself suspended over allegations that he had bullied staff members at Walsgrave Hospital.

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Despite later being found innocent of the allegations and rulings from the High Court and General Medical Council that he should be allowed to go back to work, Dr Mattu, 48, has still not returned.

He is now fighting further disciplinary allegations relating to his alleged refusal to sign pre-conditions of his reinstatement and alleged potential breaches of confidentiality, and there is no sign that he will return to work soon.

The £6 million figure is based on calculations by Dr Mattu's supporters and includes the cost of Dr Mattu's wages for the last eight years, during which he was paid two thirds of his £110,000 salary.

It also includes the hiring of two replacement locum consultants to do his job as he was a consultant physician and a consultant cardiologist, a £500,000 High Court battle, legal costs for all the complaints to the GMC, representation at the GMC and associated legal costs for the ongoing dispute with Dr Mattu.

Dr Mattu is one of dozens of medics to have faced long-term suspensions for speaking out during Labour's 13 years in charge of the NHS.

His supporters claim the £110,000-a-year specialist is the victim of a campaign to prevent him working in the NHS again.

Ted Needham, a research scientist who is involved in a campaign to reinstate Dr Mattu, said: "He has been hounded mercilessly by hospital management since he spoke about the high death rates and dangerous clinical practices.

"He has been cleared on every allegation the hospital has made and we have a situation where the talents of a highly

skilled cardiologist are being wasted, patients are being denied and the cost to the taxpayer of wasted money keeps rising.”

Dr Mattu was suspended in 2002 over an allegation by a junior doctor of harassment. It came shortly after he had publicly spoken out about conditions for patients on wards, allegations the hospital trust has always denied.

A review in 2004 cleared University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust of responsibility for any deaths in relation to overcrowding

In 2009 the GMC exonerated him of over 150 complaints made about him by the Trust and cleared him to return. It followed a £500,000 QC-led independent inquiry, ordered by the hospital, which also cleared him of wrongdoing.

A spokesman for the University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust said: "A UHCW spokesman said: "We are aware of the information being put into the public domain by Dr Mattu and his supporters.

"Much of the information being published is, in our view, false and misleading. We have however, being a responsible employer, made a commitment to keep matters between any of our employees and ourselves strictly confidential.

"Those reading or hearing information published by Dr Mattu and his supporters should not infer from our reluctance to engage with this matter in the media anything other than our desire to ensure that proper process is followed with this and all other employees.

"Certainly, a lack of comment by the Trust should not be interpreted as meaning that the Trust necessarily accepts the version of events being portrayed by Dr Mattu and his supporters as being an accurate description of the facts. The Trust will say nothing further on this matter."

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