

Dr Raj Mattu Reinstatement Committee

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With over £40 million being spent yearly on doctor's suspensions in the NHS The Today Program (29/5/04) on BBC Radio 4 has investigated the impact of new Government guidance on existing suspensions. Managers at the University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust have come under particular criticism for their failure to resolve the suspension of Dr Raj Mattu, which has entered its third year.

Brian King, Chairman of the Dr Raj Mattu Reinstatement Committee, questioned the Trust's motives for suspending Dr Mattu, "if it's about bullying it could have been settled within a week or 10 days as the procedures say it should be" and expressed the outrage of many local people "Dr Mattu's skills and ability are being wasted, public money is being wasted that could be employed giving a service to the people of Coventry."

The Trust refused to be interviewed but issued a statement saying that the new Chief Executive was aware of the community anger but "due to the seriousness of the allegations made against Dr Mattu the appropriate processes have to be followed". However, Geoffrey Robinson MP is not impressed with the Trust's continual hiding behind the procedures "frankly it's a disgrace... its such a huge waste of public money and ... a waste of talent that we desperately need. Its absurd." He expressed concerns over the lack of urgency to resolve Dr Mattu's case "They don't show any sense of urgency at all."

As of April 2004 new Government directions issued to Trusts say that no suspension should last more than 6 months. However, Gerard Panting of the Medical Protection Society is concerned for individuals, like Dr Mattu, suspended before April 2004 saying that more needs to be done, "Trust's certainly can misuse the system" and warned that those Trusts willing to pay the relatively low costs of losing an employment tribunal "can trample over people's employment rights" and "buy a way out of the problem".

Stephen Campion, Director, Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association echoes his concerns saying that checks and balances are required to protect those whose careers are on the line, "There is no accountability against people who make a complaint. Where complaints are made and subsequently found to be vexatious or malicious, I have yet to see an employer take appropriate action, I have yet to see the employer make a formal apology to the Consultant. When the exclusion process is completed there ought to be a proper evaluation to see did we do this right and how do we learn from our mistakes".

Alistair Henderson, NHS Confederation Policy Manager, admitted, "long suspensions aren't good for the individuals" excluded and that extensive delays in the procedures have been "used to the full by Trusts" when doctors are suspended. When pressed Mr Henderson admitted that the suspension process might affect quality of care.

A hearing is apparently set for next month, however the managers at the Trust have recently rejected two proposed members of the panel, and it appears that Dr Mattu, his patients and the people of Coventry and Warwickshire will be left waiting once more before some justice is done.

Brian King
Chairman, The Dr Raj Mattu Reinstatement Committee

Note: Go to <http://www.reinstatedoctorrajmattu.co.uk/today.mp3> to hear the Today Programme