

Christian GP says he will pay no heed to the GMC

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The GP Dr Richard Scott who was [disciplined](#) by the General Medical Council for distressing one of his patients by trying to persuade him to change his religion has said that he intends to continue with his proselytising activities.

In an interview with GPs magazine *The Pulse* Dr Scott said that he would not appeal the warning because of cost, but that he was not intending to change the way he practised medicine. He told the magazine: If anything it will make me even more determined to do it. I showed the GMC all the statistics that showed that spiritual care really helps peoples health... Doing God is good for your health. That is the message we tried to get across to the GMC, which they abjectively (sic) failed to grasp.

We have evidence-based medicine and if doctors are not providing spiritual care they are actually harming patients. Its a drag, because if someone else complains to the GMC, then its two yellow cards equals a red.

Keith Porteous Wood, executive director of the National Secular Society, said: "Dr Scott is clearly unrepentant, incorrigible and arrogant beyond belief. He vilified the GMC for even bringing the case, and has even done so again after he was disciplined and the awfulness of what the GMC found he had done was made public. Not a scintilla of remorse or even realisation of what he has done wrong, and the awful pressure he and his legal team put on the extremely vulnerable patient. Scott makes no bones about carrying on as he has done before. I hope if any patients of this practice have cause for complaint that they are not deterred by the boorishness bullying of Scott and his advisors. But I wouldn't bank on it.

"It would not matter if Scott were an eccentric street preacher that people can walk past, putting their fingers in their ears, but he is being paid with our money and the GMC concluded he had not acted in this patient's best interests – the warning (as opposed to him being stuck off) showed more charity than he did to his patient. Given his obduracy, how confident can we be that he will not continue in like mode?

"This is yet another case of extremist Christians claiming to be above the law or regulations to which everyone else has to adhere, just as we have found with the four applicants to the European Court of Human Rights whose cases we have intervened in.

As we noted last week, Dr Scott works at the (biblically named) Bethesda Medical Practice in Margate, whose six partners "feel that the offer of talking to you on spiritual matters is of great benefit". And if patients wish to escape this, they have to opt out. "Please tell the doctor (or drop a note to the Practice Manager) if you do not wish to speak on matters of faith."

Keith Porteous Wood said: "The partners are entitled to practise their faith but not — we contend — at the expense of the NHS. Nor are they entitled to use their privileged access to patients to try to evangelise them. We have therefore asked the NHS in Kent about the appropriateness of what we

regard as a misuse of National Health Service resources. Bethesda is not the only specifically 'Christian practice'."

Mr Wood said that the NSS would oppose any ideologically defined NHS practice, including a specifically atheist one.

The GMC has recently been consulting over its Good Medical Practice guidance, but it is not recommending any changes to the section on personal beliefs. It currently states: You must not express to your patients your personal beliefs, including political, religious or moral beliefs, in ways that exploit their vulnerability or that are likely to cause them distress.

In a statement, the Secular Medical Forum affirms its support for the GMC in protecting vulnerable patients from doctors who seek to impose their own views on them. "There is no reliable scientific evidence that one or other faith offers patients health benefits. To suggest that Christianity offers benefits that no other religion could do is itself a belief which misrepresents the available evidence," said a spokesman for the SMF.

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