

Regulator reconsiders proselytising doctor case after NSS challenge

Posted: Mon, 6th Jan 2020

A medical regulator will review a decision not to investigate a GP in Kent who has admitted he initiates conversations about religion during appointments after a National Secular Society intervention.

The General Medical Council (GMC), which registers medical practitioners, originally [decided](#) not to investigate Dr Richard Scott in November after the NSS raised concerns about his conduct.

The GMC dismissed the case on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence to take it further.

The NSS then challenged that decision, noting that evidence continued to suggest Dr Scott was openly flouting the council's code of conduct.

Now the GMC has told the society it will review its decision under [Rule 12](#) of its Fitness to Practice rules, which allow reconsideration if new information comes to light.

The NSS's challenge noted that:

- Patients at Dr Scott's surgery had [complained](#) about religion being pushed on them, as revealed in minutes from a patients' group.
- Dr Scott admitted patients had complained in the [Mail on Sunday](#) after the GMC's decision, saying "only about 10" had done so.
- Dr Scott told a radio show he would continue to initiate conversations with patients about faith, and said he hadn't changed his approach since receiving a [warning](#) for doing so in 2012.

GMC [guidance](#) says doctors "may talk about your own personal beliefs only if a patient asks you directly about them, or indicates they would welcome such a discussion".

It also says doctors must not "impose [their] beliefs and values on patients" or "cause distress by the inappropriate or insensitive expression of them".

National Secular Society chief executive Stephen Evans welcomed the GMC's decision.

"Dr Scott's recent comments appear to make clear that he holds the GMC in contempt and considers himself above the rules it puts in place to protect patients. Being an evangelical Christian should not exempt him from the standards expected of all doctors working in the UK.

"Conversion activity is exploitative and violates the trust that should exist between doctors and patients, particularly when it targets vulnerable patients. Medical regulators should take all reasonable steps to prevent it."

Background to the case

The NSS originally [raised](#) the case early in 2019 after being contacted by a member of the public who was concerned about an acquaintance being treated at Dr Scott's surgery.

The NSS was told the acquaintance was "highly vulnerable" and being made to feel uncomfortable because Dr Scott was imposing his religious views during appointments.

The NSS also raised remarks from a BBC Radio 4 interview which suggested Scott was ignoring GMC ethical guidelines.

The NSS asked the GMC to explain how it planned to ensure Dr Scott met the standards required of a doctor, and to protect patients' right to access health care without evangelism.

See also: [Fresh scrutiny for evangelical Christian GP Richard Scott](#), in The Observer.

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