

PRESS RELEASE

4.1.2012

Health Professions Council issues Caution Order to Clinical Scientist for making disparaging comments about GP

Clinical Scientist **Stuart Jones** was found guilty of professional misconduct by the Health Professions Council (HPC) for making **disparaging, inappropriate and unprofessional comments on a public forum about Dr Sarah Myhill**, a Radnorshire GP who specialises in the treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Jones was told that **‘This misconduct cannot, in the Panels (SIC) judgement, be categorised as minor.’**

Full determination: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/complaints/hearings/index.asp?id=2556>

Jones, who changed his plea to guilty during the course of the Hearing, was told:

‘... independent of the Registrant’s admission to misconduct made at the close of the case, the Panel has itself considered the question of misconduct. It is the Panel’s judgement that the Registrant’s conduct alleged at paragraph 1 of the allegations was inappropriate and unprofessional. In acting as he did he failed to keep high standards of personal conduct as well as professional conduct and his behaviour fell short of what would be proper in the circumstances.’

Jones, who is employed by the Queens Hospital, Romford had reported the GP to the General Medical Council in 2010 over concerns about the GP’s website which is used to provide additional information for her patients. Jones actions were clearly designed to damage the doctor’s reputation and the doctor was, indeed, suspended by the GMC for several months before being reinstated and the GMC case being dropped without any case to answer.

Not content to leave the matter to the GMC, Jones went onto a public forum (Bad Science) run by The Guardian columnist Ben Goldacre to comment:

‘OK, so I finally bit the bullet and complained (anonymously for reasons that will become clear) to the GMC about uber-quack, Dr Sarah Myhill and to my surprise they have decided to launch a Fitness to Practise investigation. Her response has been quite interesting so I thought I would [share](#) it with the Badscience community.’

Dr Myhill’ And on May 19th 2010 he commented:

“Yup, that’s exactly why I complained actually, to give SM a bucket load of administration to wade through and increase anxiety levels in her patients, very pleasurable in deed!

Goldacre had the offending posts removed in October 2010 and has recently deleted the direct link from his own website to the forum.

Jones, who uses a signature quote from comedian Dara O’Brain – *‘Those who live in glass houses should masturbate in the basement’* on all of his posts then engaged in frequent posts of a defamatory and disparaging nature about the doctor over a period of time exceeding 12 months.

Jones alleged that the GP was exploiting vulnerable patients and *on May 6th 2010, Jones stated:*

*‘There are few things that make me more angry than seeing **vulnerable patients being taken for a ride by deluded, pill-peddling quacks** with a tenuous (at best) grasp of scientific method. Despite what the crackpots over at PR[1] will have many CFS sufferers believe, **this has been my main motivation for making the complaint against Myhill**’*

On 24th May, 2010, Jones compounded his allegation by posting a photograph of the GP’s home and surgery and insinuated that it had been acquired through unnecessary testing of patients with *‘That’s a whole lot of mitochondrial function testing right there!’*.

In sentencing Jones, his professional body determined:

‘Whilst this Panel does not question the Registrant’s motivation with respect to his interest in the use of internet sites such as the Bad Science Forum to discuss and debate clinical issues it nevertheless finds that his posts were disparaging, inappropriate and unprofessional. As set out above the Registrant failed to keep high standards of personal conduct and it is the Panel’s judgement that his behaviour had the potential to damage public confidence in him and his profession. Whilst the Panel accept that he has shown some insight and that there is a low risk of repetition, it is the Panel’s judgement that there is a clear need, in this case, to declare and uphold proper standards of behaviour and maintain public confidence in the profession. The Registrant admitted misconduct in making disparaging comments on the Bad Science Forum about Dr XY could undermine public confidence in him and in his profession. In the circumstances of this case the public would expect the Registrant’s regulator to make a finding of impairment. Public confidence in the profession and the HPC’s regulatory role would be undermined if a finding of impairment of fitness to practise was not made.

The Panel finds that the Registrant’s fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of misconduct.’

The Panel went on to deliberate on the nature of their sanctions in saying:

‘It has considered the question of which sanction to impose in ascending order of severity. It notes that where a Panel has determined that fitness to practise is impaired, it is not obliged to impose a sanction.

It first considered to take no further action, but decided against this course **having regard to the seriousness of misconduct set out above.** To dispose of this case by taking no further action would neither reflect the seriousness of misconduct found nor address the public interest considerations referred to above. **This misconduct cannot, in the Panels judgement, be categorised as minor.'**

The Registrar was directed to annotate the Registrant's (Stuart Jones) entry in the register to show that he is subject to a Caution Order for a period of 2 years.

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During the action against Dr Myhill by the GMC nearly 5,000 supporters and patients signed an online petition protesting at the GMC's action, and over 2,000 letters and emails were also sent to the GMC providing evidence of how the doctor had helped them regain their health. The story was widely covered by the media and a number of online forums were set up in support of Dr Myhill.

This Press Release has been issued by www.supportdrmyhill.co.uk, a website set up to carry accurate and full information on the case for Dr Myhill's patients, many of whom were shocked and traumatised by what was happening to this extremely effective and popular doctor.

Dr Myhill can be contacted direct on 01547 550331

The administrator for the supporters' website can be contacted at webadmin@supportdrmyhill.co.uk.

End of press release.