



GPs prosecuted for treatment of IMG

Michael Woodhead

The operators of a Queensland GP practice are being prosecuted by the Fair Work Ombudsman over allegations that they threatened an Indian doctor for complaining about his pay.

The Loganholme Medical Surgery, located south of Brisbane, is accused of breaching the coercion and adverse action provisions of workplace laws in relation to Dr Venkata Kaza, who they sponsored to come from India to work at the practice on a medical practitioner visa.

Prosecution documents lodged in the Federal Magistrates Court

in Brisbane allege that when the doctor complained about not being paid as promised, the practice operators threatened that unless he retracted his complaint, he would not be paid and his life would be made generally miserable.

One of the senior doctors allegedly also threatened the doctor that if he quit, unspecified alleged patient complaints against him would be sent to the Medical Board of Queensland and proceedings for breach of contract would be taken against him.

According to a statement from the Fair Work Ombudsman, it is alleged that the doctor was owed a significant amount of pay when

he quit in May, 2010 and returned to India.

The sole director of the practice operator, Sheila Pathmanathan and Dr Tam Thi Thanh Tran, a senior doctor and supervisor at the Loganholme practice are accused of committing five breaches of the Fair Work Act, and face maximum penalties of \$6600 per breach and the company faces maximum penalties of \$33,000 per breach.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is also seeking a Court Order for the practice to pay compensation for loss of wages, stress, humiliation and other loss resulting from the alleged breaches.

What do you think?

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In brief

COPD triple therapy

Adding tiotropium to inhaled steroids and LABA therapy may reduce mortality, hospital admissions and need for oral corticosteroids in COPD patients, a UK study suggests. *Chest* (28 July)

AMA calls for urgent action on ASGC-RA

The AMA has called for "urgent intervention" by Nicola Roxon to release a review of the flawed new Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas system. AMA president Dr Steve Hambleton says the review has been sitting with the Department of Health and Ageing all of this year.

Doctors Health Fund to merge with Avant

The Doctors' Health Fund, which provides health cover to 7000 doctors says it wants to demutualise and merge with indemnity provider Avant Mutual Group. DHF chair Dr Stuart Boland says the merger will allow Avant to offer a wider range of insurance products to its 57,000 members.

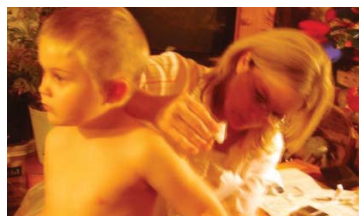
Early diabetes does not affect cognition

Michael Woodhead

Children who have an early onset of diabetes do not show any long term deficits in IQ, memory or have behavioural problems, an Australian study has shown.

In a 16-year prospective follow up of 33 children who developed type 1 diabetes before the age of six, WA researchers found no difference in intellectual ability, memory or emotional difficulties compared to healthy children.

However, when tested at the age of almost 20, the young adults with diabetes had subtle changes



No difference in IQ, memory or emotional difficulties with early diabetes

leading to poor performance in executive function, which suggested they might have greater difficulty in 'multitasking', say researchers from the Princess Margaret Hospital in Perth.

Writing in *Diabetes Care* (online

August 15), the researchers say: "Overall these findings are reassuring for families with young children with type 1 diabetes."

They found no affect of severe hyperglycaemia or glycaemic control on intellectual ability or cognitive function.

They said the subtle deficits in executive function might be relevant in complex situations where individuals need to plan or choose between two alternatives, and this could potentially affect their diabetes self care behaviour.

What do you think?

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Reason to celebrate



Medicine in the media



MEDICAL RECORDS HAVE BEEN LEFT UNSECURED

for years after a Melbourne 'Dore clinic' for treating autism and ADHD went bankrupt and closed three years ago. [The Australian](#)

MORE BARIATRIC SURGERY SHOULD BE FUNDED

in Victoria, say doctors who are questioning the value of a new \$3 million healthy eating advice hotline for children. [The Age](#)

QUACKBUSTER DR KEN HARVEY HAS ACCUSED

the director of SensaSlim of "jurisdiction shopping" after he launched a second defamation case against him, this time in Queensland. [The Age](#)

THE ALFRED HOSPITAL IN MELBOURNE WANTS TO INTRODUCE

a yellow and red card system that would see drunk, violent people refused treatment. [Bigpond News](#)

INDIGENOUS INFANTS AT THE WEANING STAGE

are not being fed properly perhaps due to poverty or because young mothers don't know how to feed them, a leading academic says. [The Australian](#)

POST POLIO SYNDROME

is still affecting some older Australians. [The Age](#)

A BOY WITH ACUTE APPENDICITIS DIED

because he was taken to the wrong hospital in Sydney and then misdiagnosed, a coroner has found. [The Australian](#)

CORPORATE HEALTH INFORMATICS COMPANIES

are preparing to mine patient data streamed from monitoring systems and held in electronic medical records. [The Australia](#)

A WOMAN RAN AWAY FROM A COSMETIC CLINIC

without paying for her botox treatment, NZ police say. [The Age](#)

THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT BURDEN INCREASED

in Devonport, Tasmania after a GP Super Clinic opened, and the local paper says it does not open after hours as promised. [The Examiner](#)

A FAMOUS FORMER FOOTBALLER DIED AFTER

"falling through the cracks" at the Royal Hobart Hospital partly because the hospital did not have a specific protocol for management of people with chest pain. [The Mercury](#)

AUSTRALIAN SCIENTISTS HAVE DISCOVERED

how subtle changes to an anti-cancer gene increase a person's risk of developing a malignancy. [The West Australian](#)

THE DEATH OF A PRISONER WITH UNTREATED ANGINA

while being transported in a prison service van has prompted a NSW coroner to recommend widespread changes to the way prisoners are transferred. [ABC](#)

What do you think?

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Anakinra for refractory gout

■ Sarah Colyer

Patients with refractory gout may benefit from off-label use of the anti-IL-1 therapy, anakinra, Australian rheumatologists report, saying it is a “welcome addition to the current arsenal of treatments”.

The doctors from Perth’s Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital describe three cases of resistant chronic tophaceous gout who responded to anakinra subcutaneous injections in the *International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases* (14:e33-e37).

Although the therapy is expensive at \$44 per injection of 100mg, they say it can be cost-effective if it prevents more than one hospital admission a year. Importantly, anakinra can be considered a “steroid sparing agent”, allowing prednisolone doses to be weaned, they say.

In one case, the patient has not had a flare for two months after being given a short course of anakinra. Another patient, however, has required anakinra



The injection appears effective in gout and may be steroid sparing

every third day to stop further flares. No serious side-effects were encountered in any of the patients, but infection was vigorously excluded prior to initiation.

In their report, the doctors say it is important to rely on urate lowering therapy whilst “under anakinra cover”, as anakinra does not reduce tophi size.

Sydney rheumatologist, Associate Professor Lyn March, said anakinra was of “possible interest” as a treatment for refractory gout, but said more trials were needed to demonstrate cost-effectiveness.

International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases; 14:e33-e37
comment@6minutes.com.au

CAM sold without safety leaflets

■ Michael Woodhead

More product information should be provided when herbal remedies are sold in pharmacies, experts say.

In a UK **study** researchers found few of the most widely used complementary and alternative medicines were supplied with information about what consumers should check for to avoid harm before using the product.

The results echoed a study of Australian pharmacy customers who said pharmacists should provide safety information about herbal products.

“This study has shown that, among five herbal products commonly purchased OTC in the UK, most contained little or no information,” the authors said in *BMC Medicine* (9:94)

“Three-quarters of the preparations contained no safety information... For St John’s wort, which has generated the most publicity regarding safe use, two-thirds of preparations dialed to mention any of the possible

interactions with conventional medicines such as the oral contraceptive or warfarin.”

The researchers said that preparations of products in the UK’s Traditional Herbal Registration (THR) category were significantly more likely to have product information.

However, they found inconsistencies in the levels of product information provided, and where a product was registered as a THR, over 85 per cent of the information recommended by the authors was included in the packaging for the product.

“That this figure was not 100 per cent reflects the lack of consensus on the safety information associated with individual herbal medicines,” they said.

The authors concluded that consumers were “entitled to better information with the CAMs they buy” to ensure they are aware of any possible safety issues and they can make informed decisions as to whether or not they use it.

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RADIO CAMPAIGN RUNNING NOW

Raising bedwetting awareness across the nation

A national bedwetting awareness campaign is **now running** on the radio in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

Your patients may come in with their bedwetting checklist and questions from www.treatbedwetting.com.au

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Your say

Warning on antipsychotics in elderly [\(link\)](#)

Behavioural and psychological strategies are far more important than medications to assist with behaviours associated with dementia.

The Commonwealth has assisted state governments to develop specialist teams to assist aged care facilities with behavioural and psychological strategies. These teams are available for consultation in metropolitan and rural areas. Access is dependant on how the states have resourced them.

Aged care facilities are poorly resourced to manage these issues however generally tend to do much better than many acute facilities. I would reserve any judgement either on the



aged care facilities, the GP or the coroner without all the facts.

David

Perhaps if Aged Care Homes paid for more staff and training to care and comfort patients rather than doing the paperwork for accreditation regulations, then patients might not need sedation to control their behaviour. GPs cop the blame from authorities and relatives when complications of their medication prescribing, but

stressed nurses under strained conditions harass us for assistance. Hopefully GPs can be appointed on accreditation committees one fine day and bring in positive change.

Terry Ahern

Medemail shuts [\(link\)](#)

Losing my email address after all these years has been like someone taking away the home address. It has been a learning experience. On the up side, I won't get a lot of that spam any more.

Greg

Edelsten goes to Hollywood [\(link\)](#)

I don't think we should be commenting or discussing

what this businessman does or doesn't do. He is an irrelevance. His past "medical" history is there for all to see. The effects of what Edelesten did to Australian medicine (and the reputation of Australian doctors) is something we should all be reflecting on. When I arrived in Australia in 1986, GPs were justly regarded as decent, honest and honourable. What is the perception now and who - amongst others - is responsible for this change in perception?

Ian

Zoster vaccination for all at 65 [\(link\)](#)

A great idea if you were able to get hold of any vaccines. Last time I rang about a month ago none was available.

Wendy Luxton

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