



Department of Justice

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JURY UPHOLDS DISMISSAL OF PHYSICIAN AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER IN CHILLICOTHE

COLUMBUS – A jury in a civil trial in U.S. District Court here upheld the dismissal of Dr. Venkanna Kanna who was fired by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Chillicothe in 2006.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, and Jeffrey T. Gering, Director, Chillicothe Veterans Affairs Medical Center, announced the verdict returned Thursday, July 22, 2010 after 90 minutes of deliberation following a trial that began on Monday, July 19, 2010 before U.S. District Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr.

According to court documents, Dr. Venkanna Kanna was employed as a physician by the Department of Veterans Affairs from September 1984 until his termination from the VA Medical Center in Chillicothe, Ohio on June 2, 2006. Kanna sued the VA arguing that he was dismissed on the basis of his race and national origin in violation of Title VII. Trial testimony argued that the VA-Chillicothe's decision to terminate Kanna was in response to his misconduct during three incidents transpiring between January 28 and February 1, 2006.

The incidents involved patient abuse by intentional omission of care; disrespectful conduct toward patients; failure to provide efficient service when dealing with the public; and disrespectful conduct toward co-workers.

According to testimony presented during the trial, a patient with a history of cardiac disease was admitted under Kanna's care for chest pain on January 30, 2006. Kanna discharged the patient without providing instructions for follow up care or ordering any of the diagnostic tests requested by the patient's general care physician. A review by the Veterans Affairs Administrative Investigation Board (AIB) categorized Kanna's failure to prescribe "further cardiac work up" as substandard care.

On February 1, 2006, Kanna was assigned as his department's Medical Officer of the Day, a duty which required him to see all patients who arrived in the admitting area between 4:30 and 6:30 p.m., even if that would require him to remain on duty after his scheduled shift ended. At the end of his shift, a staff nurse told him there were more patients in need of his attention. Instead of seeing the patients, Kanna handed the duty keys and pager to the arriving duty doctor and left.

In a third incident, also on February 1, 2006, Kanna delayed treating a patient who arrived at the hospital with a potentially life-threatening heart problem. A review by the Veterans Affairs AIB concluded that Dr. Kanna's failure to treat this patient was patient abuse.

After an internal investigation, the hospital dismissed Kanna on March 30, 2006. "The jury's verdict affirms the hospital's actions to protect their patients," Stewart said. "I want to commend Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher Yates and Michael Burns who defended the VA's actions in this case."

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