



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 10, 2019

U.K. Doctor Investigated for Praying With Patients Cleared

After a three-month investigation into whether a Christian physician's praying with his patients might render him unfit to practice, a U.K. medical authority dismissed the case against him for lack of evidence.

In June, the National Secular Society (NSS), which is hostile to religion, filed a complaint with the General Medical Council (GMC) stating that the NSS was "concern[ed]" that Dr. Richard Scott, a general practitioner and partner in Bethesda Medical Center in Margate, England, was "continuing to pray and promote Christianity during consultations in an attempt to convert patients." Specifically, the NSS charged that Scott made a "highly vulnerable" patient feel "discomfort at the use of prayer."



As the NSS's mention of Scott's "continuing to pray" indicates, this was not the 59-year-old physician's first run-in with the group. In 2012, the GMC [censured](#) Scott for discussing his faith and praying with another patient. The NSS was also involved in that case.

"The NSS is obviously gunning for me — and would like me to lose my job because they don't like me," Scott told the [Telegraph](#). "They think I am irresponsible and dangerous and I would say the same about them."

Scott does pray and talk about faith with some of his patients. As [The New American](#) reported in June, Scott "claims he always asks patients for permission to discuss faith or pray with them, but only after completing his regular medical duties. He estimates that he offers prayer to about one patient out of every 40 he sees."

On June 7, the GMC informed Scott that it was opening a fitness-to-practice inquiry as a result of the NSS's latest complaint — which, it should be noted, was based on an account provided to the NSS by a purported acquaintance of the allegedly discomfited patient. According to [Christian Concern](#), a U.K. Evangelical organization, the GMC's letter to Scott stated that the board had "identified some areas of good medical practice that have been called into question" and needed to "find out more information to see if this is correct and, if so, whether your fitness to practice medicine is potentially impaired." (Christian Concern's legal-aid arm, the Christian Legal Centre, advised Scott during the investigation.)

It took the GMC three months to come to the obvious conclusion that there was no case against Scott, at which time the council dismissed it.

"There is no first-hand account of complaint from any patient about Dr. Scott's practice. The NSS sent an anonymous hearsay account about how Dr. Scott expressed his religious beliefs to a 'highly vulnerable' patient," the GMC wrote in a letter to Scott, adding: "There is no convincing evidence that Dr. Scott imposes his personal religious beliefs upon potentially vulnerable patients."



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Furthermore, observed the GMC, “There is no evidence that [Scott] discusses faith in situations where the patient has stated that they do not wish to discuss these matters or that he has continued to discuss faith after a patient has indicated that they do not welcome such a discussion.”

The GMC did, however, advise Scott to document any discussions of faith he has with his patients and only to offer prayer within the council’s previously issued guidelines.

“This complaint should never have got to this stage. It was clear from the outset that the NSS was targeting not just me and the practice, but also the freedom of Christian professionals across the U.K. to share their faith in the workplace. The toll placed on my family and me, as a result of one spurious complaint, was totally unnecessary,” Scott said. “Yet it is my hope that this outcome will mean other Christian practitioners will not have to go through similar experiences.”

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, said, “The outcome of this case not only gives reassurance to Christian doctors and professionals across the U.K. that they can share their faith in the workplace, but also clear guidance on how they can share it without fear of losing their jobs.”

Scott, she added, “is a brilliant doctor, loved and respected in his community and especially by his patients. It is because of his Christian faith that he is motivated to look after the person well beyond the consulting room.”



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