

Is CentraCare Shariah Compliant? Decide for Yourself

I am a licensed physician in Minnesota. I have had no disciplinary actions against me, have never been sued for malpractice, and strive every day to be the best doctor and person I can be in my professional life.

I do locums (AKA “rent-a-doc”) work through an agency and have practiced in a variety of health care settings. It has been an interesting experience participating in health care delivery in cities, towns and rural areas, including a prison and Indian Reservation, and I have worked with a broad array of diverse patients and staff. Among these are Hispanics, blacks, Muslims, middle class, poor, and wealthy, Native Americans, Asians, Jehovah’s witnesses, young, old, gay, straight, veterans - the full gamut of humanity. I consistently strive to give the best care possible in ways that respect individuals at their point of need, and for these many years there have been no issues regarding my care nor have there been complaints of other sorts. I put in long hours and take my work seriously.

In my non-professional time, I am involved as a citizen activist. In particular, I give presentations on Islam and Shariah Law. My interest stems from being raised in and briefly working in Saudi Arabia. On one day in the local hospital, I interacted with 38 distinct nationalities! I have put a phenomenal amount of effort into making my presentation (Shariah 101) as factual, fair, and informative as possible. I use content that is mainstream, current, relevant, and broadly approved by Muslims, and present it all fairly and in context. Among the points I make are that by misunderstanding Islam, our leaders are unwittingly very disrespectful toward it. I demonstrate how Shariah Law is a rigorously developed and cohesive legal system. I review formal unified statements made by and in the name of Islam that represent the consensus of what Muslims want westerners to understand about Islam and what they say about themselves and their beliefs. Sadly, this has been reported as promoting hate toward Muslims.

I was invited several months ago to do my presentation in ██████████, Minnesota, and that presentation occurred on January █, 2016. There were several other elected officials present.

In the week after January █ there were coincidentally several “interfaith dialogs” - a “Conversation about Islam” in Mankato, sponsored by a Our Lady of Good Counsel; an “Interfaith Community Discussion” sponsored by the city of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota and mayor Jeff Lunde; and a presentation on Islamophobia by Jaylani Hussein, sponsored by the President’s Office at St. Cloud State University. Islam being the massive subject matter that it is, these presentations tend to cover different material. The event I was at was private and invitation only, for security reasons. While we essentially had to meet in hiding and pay our own way, major government institutions used taxpayer money for the presentations they hosted.

That is all background and context for what follows.

I have worked at CentraCare Health locations for the past 6+ years, at 4 different locations within the system. I have had excellent working relations with staff and patients at all locations, and just a week prior to my presentation I was told by the clinic manager in my then current location that they would be needing my services - as much time as I could provide - for at least the next 5 months. Less than one week later (possibly as little as 4 days later) my agency received a call from CentraCare indicating that my services were no longer desired. No reason was given.

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I find the timing odd.

Actually, I don't. I have no doubt that word got to the powers that be at CentraCare about my non-medical, citizen education activities and they decided (based on misreporting about my presentation) that being deferential to Islam was more important than having adequate staffing at their facilities. This is after 6+ years of no complaints, and no indication on the ground of any difficulty, and after having been told just a few weeks earlier that they would need as much of my time as I could provide until July.

While CentraCare was under no legal obligation to continue to use my services (that is the price of being an "independent contractor"), I find this not only a very poor way to treat people on a human level but also a worrisome indication of how advanced deference to Islam already is in our state.

Let's be crystal clear about what has happened. Centacare Health, the dominant entity providing health care services in central Minnesota, has made a formal decision that it is a higher priority for them to please the interests of Islam than to provide access to care for its patients. In addition, they have determined that pleasing Islam is such a high priority that basic standards of human decency, such as offering me an opportunity to respond to (or even be aware of) any concerns that might have been raised, should be ignored.

There is no claim that I provided poor care. There is no claim of any sort of maltreatment of any individual. There is no allegation of drug use, sexual impropriety, or criminal or unethical behavior. When I gently confronted the clinic manager in my current location, I was told that it was the topic (of Islam) itself that was the issue, and that it did not fit in with "the culture" they sought to create. I could also tell that the decision had been imposed on her. Indeed, she and I had discussed hosting my presentation in that community only a week earlier. I am concerned for my professional reputation. I believe there are powerful forces that were brought to bear in a very short period of time in order for this sort of bizarre and extreme reaction to come from such a large, well-established, professional health care organization.

I am concerned that sharing this information will cause a flood of false allegations to be created, and so I am putting CentraCare and anyone associated with this decision on notice that it is my intent to hold them responsible for any libel, slander, loss of reputation, loss of employability and other harm that may come my way as a result of their misdeed(s).

This necessary response goes against every fiber of my being; those fibers being honesty, transparency, communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and continuous improvement and healing. CentraCare, with one phone call, has shattered the trust necessary for any of those attributes to survive.

Never forget - CentraCare has decided to value political deference to Islam over patient access to health care. That should frighten everyone.

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