

21.12.13

6 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding General Medical Council investigation (OQ.243/2021):

Will the Minister advise whether he is aware of the results of any investigation by the General Medical Council into the conduct of a senior ophthalmic surgeon and a senior maternity consultant in connection with the withdrawal of an offer of employment to Dr. Alwitry, and if so, will the Minister state what action, if any, has been taken by Health and Community Services as a result?

Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I am aware that the General Medical Council conducted an investigation into an ophthalmologist in 2015 in relation to the Alwitry case. This case was closed in October 2015 with no action taken by the G.M.C. (General Medical Council) and consequently no action taken by Health and Community Services. I am not aware of any G.M.C. investigation into a maternity consultant in connection with the Alwitry case.

3.6.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Given that it has cost the taxpayer a substantial amount, why is the taxpayer not entitled to know what they have paid for?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am sorry, I do not understand the question. The taxpayer does not pay for the General Medical Council.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

No, but the whole investigation has arisen and has cost the taxpayer because of the behaviour of the members of the medical profession in turning down and sacking the doctor before he took up his post.

The Bailiff:

Senator, I am not sure the Minister can comment on any of those things. It seems to me your question was designed to the General Medical Council's investigation into the conduct of 2 members of the medical profession. Only one has been investigated and the Minister has said he is not aware of any other investigation and he said that no further action will be taken, so it is not clear that there has been a cost to members of the public as a result of the actions of members of the medical profession. Are you able to reframe your question in a way which ...

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Given that the investigation of the senior ophthalmic surgeon has led to a course of action which has eventually cost the taxpayer a substantial amount, why cannot the taxpayer know what the results of the investigation were? It seems unreasonable that eventually it is causing them to have to pay money or taxpayers footing the bill for something like nearly £3 million in gross damages and goodness knows what, and yet an investigation ...

The Bailiff:

Senator, forgive me. What is the question? You have said a number of things, but I am not quite certain what the question is directed to the Minister.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

What were the findings of the investigation?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

There was a reference in one case to the General Medical Council but, as I have said, no action was taken by the General Medical Council and that is what appears on the record. I do not believe there has been any expense to the taxpayer in the reference to the General Medical Council, so I am afraid I really cannot understand what the Senator is seeking from this question.

3.6.2 Senator K.L. Moore:

A general question now, if the Minister could describe to the Assembly whether it is usual practice for the findings of a report to the General Medical Council to be shared with the Minister?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I believe the General Medical Council reports would be sent to the Island's medical director, who would then brief me accordingly, but the results of General Medical Council investigations are posted on the Council's website, and anyone can go to the website, look up the name of any healthcare professional to see if there is any investigation that has been conducted and what the results of that investigation might be. In this case, there has been one investigation and the Council chose to take no action.

3.6.3 Senator K.L. Moore:

Would the Minister be aware of more recent reports that have been suppressed from publication on the G.M.C.'s website?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am not privy to how the G.M.C. reports. That would be a question of their own governance. I am certainly not aware of any suppression of reports but the G.M.C. is not something that comes under my remit, of course. They are a large organisation.

3.6.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

In fact the Minister confirms that we can go on to the G.M.C. website and look up this investigation?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think it is the case that what is available is the record that an investigation was undertaken but no action was taken.