

Lord Walton of Detchant  
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November 9, 2006

Dear Lord Walton

Before I explain why I am writing out of the blue, perhaps I can remind you of our acquaintance. We first met when I gave evidence in 1993 to the Lords' Select Committee which you chaired. I was then General Secretary of the Christian Medical Fellowship and Chairman of HOPE, Healthcare Opposed to Euthanasia. We met briefly a number of times subsequently at conferences, culminating in that very worthwhile weekend at Windsor Castle. From the USA, I followed with interest your excellent work last year.

From 1999-2003 I was an elected member of the GMC (gaining the second highest number of votes of any doctor in England, which I think indicates the support I have within the profession). Deciding not to stand for re-election, I nevertheless continued doing fitness to practise casework, chairing Professional Conduct Committees, and later serving regularly on the Preliminary Proceedings Committee, until the end of 2004.

It is in connection with the GMC that I write. I became concerned by the way the GMC and others treated Dr Jennifer Colman after her election to the Council in 2000, and having followed her case exhaustively it is clear to me that the profession and the press treated her so wrongly after 2000 because of all the events that led to her erasure in 1987.

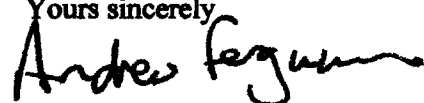
Here your role was pivotal, and, with respect, I think you made a grave error in initiating a PCC hearing on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations, against the advice of senior staff, and following a cursory screening process and dubious application of the PPC. I should say that (along with a number of senior doctors) I have seen, and hold copies, of all the original documentation, including the pre-determined sanction of erasure.

I appreciate how different the medical culture was in the 1980s, but by any standards then or now your actions fell uncharacteristically short of those to be expected from the leading figure of the medical establishment. You may partially rectify them now by acknowledging error and apologising personally to Dr Colman. It is the right thing to do.

Please understand that I am writing this partly out of my continuing commitment to see justice for Dr Colman but also out of respect for you and for what you have achieved for the profession and in ethics.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely



Dr Andrew Fergusson