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Nurse snatched scalpel off doctor about to cut vein

Saturday, December 14, 2013

A nurse has described how she cried 'Jesus, what are you doing?' and snatched a scalpel from a doctor's hand, moments before he was about to cut into an elderly patient's vein in order to take a blood sample.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte Health Service Executive

By Kevin Keane

The nurse has told a medical council inquiry that she honestly did not believe that Vincent Osunkwo was a proper doctor and he "didn't have a clue" how to treat patients.

An inquiry has heard that Dr Osunkwo received the job of senior house officer at Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise after nobody else applied for the post.

A senior consultant said Dr Osunkwo lacked "basic knowledge that could be expected of any medical student".

He faces five separate allegations of poor professional performance and professional misconduct arising out of his treatment of patients in the hospital between Mar 9 and Apr 12, 2009.

These include that he attempted to read an X-ray upside down, and that he told members of his medical team a patient was 'fine' when that patient was in fact receiving oxygen in intensive care.

It is also alleged he told a consultant a scan performed on a patient's kidney was 'fine' when it in fact showed multiple abnormal masses.

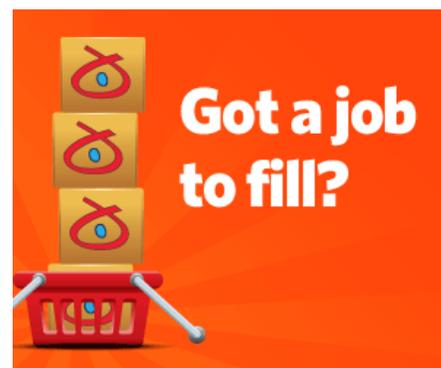
Dr Osunkwo has returned to his native Nigeria and did not turn up for the inquiry. He told solicitors representing the CEO of the Medical Council the allegations against him "border on character assassination". He has failed to respond to subsequent emails about his case.

Dr Osunkwo applied for an Irish visa in May of this year but was refused entry. His subsequent appeal was also refused.

The inquiry heard evidence from a woman who, at the direction of the fitness to practise committee, was only identified as Nurse X.

She said that on the evening of Mar 10, 2009, a frail, elderly patient was admitted to A&E from a nursing home.

Nurse X said the woman needed to have her blood type checked in case she required a transfusion, and she asked Dr Osunkwo if he would 'canulate,' or, insert a tube, into the patient.



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"I said to nurse Buckley, I am concerned he doesn't know what he's doing," Nurse X told the inquiry.

She continued: "Dr Osunkwo had a scalpel in his hand. She (the patient) was crying he was about to cut into a vein, I said, 'Jesus what are you doing?'"

"He was holding her hand quite tightly and she was saying, 'no it's sore.'

"I pulled it out of his hand and I said why? He mumbled something under his breath and had a blank look on his face."

"I didn't honestly believe that that was a real doctor that night. He just hadn't a clue how to treat a patient," she added.

Peter Naughton, a consultant surgeon at Portlaoise until his retirement in 2010, said he would never have been happy to give Dr Osunkwo any clinical responsibility.

Mr Naughton said Dr Osunkwo got the job after the original, successful applicant let the hospital down by not turning up.

He said the role of Senior House Officer was advertised nationally and internationally, but Dr Osunkwo was the only applicant.

The case is set to continue next week.

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