

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Griffith: Unlicensed Former Physician Named In Patient Deaths Brought On At JFL To "Improve Customer Service"

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We could have done better due diligence in bringing her on here. She would only be functioning in the role of doing improved billing, assisting physicians with improving their documentation, and also with improving customer service and improving workflow.

Hospital CEO Dr. Kendall Griffith made this statement confirming the leadership of his hospital did not perform a thorough background check of a former model and unlicensed physician whose botched cosmetic surgery procedures in 2013 at her now-defunct

Opulence Aesthetic Medicine clinic in Kennesaw, Ga., left two young women dead, before bringing her on as an emergency room consultant at the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital.

Griffith spoke with the *VI Consortium* following a press conference on Tuesday [to announce](#) the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) decision not to terminate its relationship with JFL on Oct. 9. When asked who were the person(s) at JFL responsible for contracting the services of Nedra Dodds, Griffith said he is to blame.

"Ultimately, with any decision that's been made that hasn't been brought to the board for consideration, that is below a certain threshold, I am ultimately responsible," he said. "Dr. Dodds' decision to have a service contract agreement [with JFL] was ultimately my decision; I signed off on it."

The *VI Consortium* learned of Dodds' affiliation with JFL from information received through its tip line. Sources familiar with Dodds' hiring informed the *VI Consortium* that she had attended medical school with a physician at JFL, suggesting this could provide the link between Dodds receiving a contract, which Griffith would only identify as being under \$100,000, at the hospital. However, at press time, the *VI Consortium* had been unable to independently confirm the connection between Dodds and another JFL physician.

The Georgia Composite Medical Board stripped Dodds of her medical license on February 28, 2014, but Dodds was brought on as an emergency room consultant at JFL on September 17, 2014, the same day CMS informed the hospital it would no longer provide medicare and medicaid reimbursements to the hospital due to the findings of an August 2014 audit. The CMS report outlined 112 pages of malpractice, deficiencies and al, including the hiring of physicians through special vetting procedures.



Nedra Dodds, a former metro Atlanta-based plastic surgeon

stripped of her medical license in February by the Georgia Composite Medical Board in connection with two patient deaths

Griffith insisted that during the nearly three weeks Dodds maintained an active consultant contract at the hospital, before it was allegedly terminated on Sat., Oct. 4--two days

before the *VI Consortium* broke the story--she had no contact with patients.

"Dr. Dodds never has touched a patient, never will touch a patient...as a matter of fact, once we found out the extent of her history, we terminated her contract and that is all part of our process," he said. "This happened on October 4th, so when we found out, we terminated the agreement."

When this reporter suggested that a simple Google search of Dodds' name would have revealed all of the former physician's actions that led to the suspension of her medical license in the state of Georgia, Griffith said he was uncertain how JFL's vetting process worked.

"I cannot speak to the vetting process, it could be better and it will be better," he said. "This has been a major learning experience for us; a major learning experience for me."

He reiterated, "I just want to make one thing clear, no patient was touched, no patient was harmed, this was strictly an administrative position where someone who had built a successful practice could bring to the emergency room what we were looking for, which was improved customer service."

Griffith then revisited his earlier point of the hospital's goal to turn things around.

"I think that what is more important here is that we are looking at ways that we can improve our customer service," he said. "The clinical experience that this physician had, had nothing to do with the administrative skills; and so, we engaged this person administratively to help us to improve our processes. Once we found out the extent of her clinical background, we did not think that it would be a good fit for JFL and we terminated the relationship."

Late Monday night, after the *VI Consortium's* [first report on this story](#), Dr. Griffith emailed a prepared statement to us:

Dr. Nedra Dodds was hired by JFL on September 17, 2014 to perform professional services as a consultant. Her contract was very specific and involved no clinical services or interactions with any JFL patients. As has been previously shared with the media, JFL has been reviewing and revamping its protocols and processes to provide meaningful reform hospital-wide, especially since receiving the results of the CMS survey. This effort includes reevaluating all of our vendors and the services they are contracted to provide to the hospital. The professional services contract for Dr. Nedra Dodds was reviewed as part of JFL's due diligence process JFL terminated its relationship with Dr. Dodds as of October 4, 2014.

Dodds' Patient Abuse and Medical License Suspension

Investigative reporter Adam Murphy of the CBS affiliate in Atlanta investigated Dodds [for seven months](#) after learning of the deaths of the two young women following procedures of liposuction and a buttocks reduction at Dodds' [Opulence Aesthetic Medicine](#) practice. The *VI Consortium* placed a call to the number listed on the company's website, but the number was disconnected.

In its suspension of Dodds' license on Friday, Feb. 28, 2014, the Georgia Composite Medical Board wrote in its Order of Summary Suspension that, "The Board finds that Respondent's continued practice of medicine poses a threat to the public health, safety, and welfare and imperatively requires emergency action and hereby ORDERS that Respondent's license to practice medicine in the state of Georgia be and is hereby SUMMARILY SUSPENDED..."

The Order further outlined some of the gruesome details surrounding patient "AJ's" death as a direct result of cosmetic surgery procedures performed by Dodds:

WHEREAS, the Board has received reliable information that Respondent's surgical care and treatment of patient A. J. was unprofessional and fell below the standard of care, causing patient AJ. significant pain during surgery and causing or significantly contributing to patient A.J.'s death: a. AJ., a 37 year old woman, presented for liposuction and fat injections into her buttocks on February 19, 2013. b. Respondent completed the procedure in less than one hour and 45 minutes. c. During the liposuction portion of the procedure, AJ.'s diaphragm and liver capsule were lacerated, and A.J.'s intercostal spaces were penetrated twice, causing hemorrhaging of 250 cc of blood into the abdominal cavity from the liver, GI mesentery, and right renal fat pad. d. AJ. was not properly sedated and remained largely conscious during portions of the procedure. Two staff members reported that AJ. was "completely conscious" or "fully aware"; that she protested loudly, complaining that the procedure was "tearing" and "burning"; and that Respondent told AJ. to be quiet because "she had paid for this." One of these staff members reported that Respondent placed a rag in AJ.'s mouth to quiet her during the procedure.

The Order also pointed out Dodds was Board Certified only in emergency care, but not in plastic surgery, the medical practice under which she performed the fatal procedures on patient "AJ" and 27-year-old, Erica Beaubrun. See the Medical Board's full report [here](#).

View the video below for the complete story on Dodds' background, as reported by CBS 46 in Atlanta.

View the original embedded media (unavailable in the recovered archive)