

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Exclusive: Dr. Griffith Says Nedra Dodds Was Brought To J.F.L. By Chief Medical Officer Without His Consent (Part 1)

Health / **Published On February 03, 2016 12:52 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **February 03, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- In an exclusive interview on Tuesday, Dr. Kendall Griffith, former CEO of the Juan F. Luis Hospital (J.F.L.), said that [a story The Consortium published on October 6, 2014](#) revealing that J.F.L. had hired Nedra Dodds, a former metro Atlanta-based plastic surgeon stripped of her medical license in February of the same year by the Georgia Composite Medical Board in connection with two patient deaths, had been employed as a contract worker at J.F.L., almost caused him to quit the CEO position.

The story made [national headlines](#), and caused much controversy locally, with some calling for Dr. Griffith's resignation, arguing that hiring Dr. Dodds while knowing her troubled history, and at a time when the hospital was under pressure to come into compliance with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services through a Systems Improvement Agreement, was poor judgement. On January 28, Dr. Dodds and her former assistant, Kevin McCowan, [were indicted](#) on felony-murder and other charges, the former carrying a life sentence.

### [CBS46 News](#)

Consumer investigative reporter Adam Murphy of the CBS affiliate in Atlanta investigated Dr. Dodds, a former model, [for seven months](#) after learning of the deaths of two young women following procedures of liposuction and a buttocks reduction at Dodds' now-defunct [Opulence Aesthetic Medicine](#) practice in Kennesaw, Ga.

The State Medical Board suspended Dr. Dodds' license on Friday, Feb. 28, 2014, saying, "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..."

But Dr. Dodds' troubled past was seemingly ignored, as J.F.L. hired her to perform financial services to help streamline its bookkeeping.



Dr. Kendall Griffith during a J.F.L.

board meeting in October, 2015. Image Credit: VIC.

In a statement issued to the press in October, 2014, Dr. Griffith said: "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."

But in an exclusive tell-all interview with The Consortium on Tuesday at the Cardiac Center here, Dr. Griffith revealed what happened behind the scenes in relation to the

hiring of the troubled doctor.

Dr. Griffith said while he was ultimately held accountable for Dr. Dodds, he was not the one who invited her to work at the facility, did not know of her before she arrived at J.F.L., and even after initially refusing to hire her, she was already at the hospital without his consent looking at operations; brought by the hospital's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Mavis Mathew.

#### [CBS46 News](#)

The former CEO said that as a leader, he "backs up" the decisions of his subordinates, and "if things go well, they get the credit, and if things go bad, I get the blame." But with the Nedra Dodds issue, in hindsight, "I probably could have been a bit more transparent with what actually happened. But at the time I didn't think it was necessary because we were trying to build a strong team, be cohesive and trying to bring J.F.L. to the next level," Dr. Griffith said.

He added: "Let me just clarify, Nedra Dodds was someone I hadn't met before. I had never met the woman before in my life. I was in the emergency room when the chief of the ER told me about this physician, and that she could help us out with processes and so forth." Dr. Griffith said he was then told that Dr. Dodds had been having challenges with her practice in Atlanta, and he immediately refused to hire her.

"Immediately I said no. I said I'm not interested. We are too much under the CMS scrutiny to even think about bringing anybody like that into the organization. Then someone called her and told her that the CEO was in the ER, and just when I was in the parking lot getting ready to leave, I was flagged down and told that Dr. Dodds was here."

"So I had a conversation with her, and she confirmed that she had been in our hospital looking at our processes, and think that she could help. She said that she had a thriving practice in Atlanta." Dr. Griffith said he then asked Dr. Dodds about the issue with her license in Georgia, and she confirmed that some patients had died, however it was her eaths. "But because I own the practice, my quoting what Dr. Dodds told him.



Dr. Mavis Mathew, center left and tallest, pose

for a picture with J.F.L.'s Neonatal Unit nurses. Image Credit: JFL's Facebook Page.

He went on to say that at the time, the hospital was working to make the emergency room a paperless operation, but did not have an employee who could perform the task. "So I said, let me discuss it with our chief medical officer, who was the one who brought Nedra Dodds to the hospital."

"The CMO said it was my decision," Dr. Griffith said. But because Dr. Mathew was the one who brought Dr. Dodds to the hospital, he said he told her that he would trust her judgement. "The contract then showed up on my desk," Dr. Griffith added. "So the conversation that we had had, was that she would not be licensed to practice; she would not be able to touch any patients -- she was simply there to just look at the billing processes.

Asked directly was it a mistake to hire Dr. Dodds, Dr. Griffith was direct: "Yes, it was a mistake. In hindsight I should have just left that one alone." Dr. Griffith said he later asked his CMO who was Dr. Dodds and how did she come to St. Croix, and was told that he was sent an email detailing her past.

"I left it alone, but I thought, something like that warrants a discussion; and an email was not good enough." And while Dr. Griffith admitted that he should have been more forthcoming, "I was just trying to be leader. I was trying to backup my colleagues, and to me, that's what a leader does. You are in charge, you are at the helm, and that's what you do. When things are bad you take the brunt of it, and when things are good, you give your subordinates the glory, and that's what I did.

"But that was one of the most difficult challenges of not only of my CEO tenure, but of my life."

The Consortium interviewed Dr. Griffith prior to learning of Dr. Dodds' indictment. Part two of the interview will be published next week.