

The Virgin Islands Consortium

District Attorney Drops Felony Murder Charges Against Nedra Dodds, Former Surgeon Employed By JFL

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ST. CROIX -- Felony murder charges against Nedra Dodds, a former metro Atlanta-based plastic surgeon stripped of her medical license in February of 2014 by the Georgia Composite Medical Board in connection with two patient deaths, and who was briefly employed as a contract worker at the Juan F. Luis Hospital (J.F.L.) before being [dismissed](#) after The Consortium reported on the matter, were dropped based on an order from Cobb County District Attorney Vic Reynolds on Wednesday, January 11, according to CBS 46 in Atlanta. The D.A. cited insufficient evidence to prosecute on the felony murder and aggravated battery charges filed against Ms. Dodds -- [accused of killing two](#)

[patients while performing cosmetic surgery.](#)

According to CBS 46, Mr. Reynolds said his lead prosecutor left for another job and the case was assigned to someone else. After further review, it was determined they could not prove criminal intent beyond a reasonable doubt.

"I told them to review it, look at it again, they did. I brought other lawyers in to look at it and in conclusion they came to me all together and said Vic this isn't a case that needs to be handled in a criminal court," Mr. Reynolds said. "That doesn't mean that we don't believe that something happened that shouldn't. It doesn't mean we don't believe there was a case of malpractice. It doesn't mean we believe these people ought to be practicing medicine."

Ms. Dodds and another doctor, Kevin McCowan, were indicted in early 2016 by a Cobb County Grand Jury on charges of felony murder, aggravated battery, and theft by deception.

Dodds's Connection to the Virgin Islands

In an exclusive interview last year, 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 Ms. Dodds in the same year that her license was stripped by the Georgia Composite Medical Board in connection with two patient deaths, 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.

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's now-defunct [Opulence Aesthetic Medicine](#) practice in Kennesaw, Ga.

The State Medical Board suspended Ms. 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 Ms. Dodds's troubled past was seemingly ignored, as J.F.L. hired her to perform "professional services" in an effort to help the hospital streamline its bookkeeping.

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 last year at the Cardiac Center here, Dr. Griffith revealed what happened behind the scenes in relation to the hiring of the troubled former surgeon.

Dr. Griffith said while he was ultimately held accountable for Ms. 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 former Chief Medical Officer Dr. Mavis Mathew.

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 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 Ms. Dodds about the issue with her license in Georgia, and she confirmed that some patients had died, however it was her colleague who was responsible for those deaths. "But because I own the practice, my license is being pulled in," Dr. Griffith said, quoting what Ms. Dodds told him.

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."