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Former professor sues University

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Posted: 9/29/08

A former professor of anesthesiology at the GW Medical Center is suing the University in federal court for \$2 million over allegations of gender and retaliatory discrimination.

Dina Soliman, who was an assistant professor for anesthesiology and critical care medicine, said several of her superiors in the Anesthesiology Department unfairly discriminated against her between 1998 and 2007. The complaint states that the doctors made Soliman work long hours, paid her less than her male counterparts and spread rumors about her to other employees.

The alleged maltreatment peaked in Sept. 2006 when two of Soliman's colleagues said her mistakes led to the accidental death of a patient, according to court documents. She said in her suit, filed this June, that the discrimination only got worse when she reported it to the heads of the department.

Michael Berrigan, the chair of the Anesthesiology Department, and scheduler Jason Sankar "spread false rumors among the hospital staff that Dr. Soliman was having affairs with residents and was therefore a threat to residents and fellows," according to the complaint.

University spokeswoman Tracy Schario would not comment on the case, citing the University's policy about not commenting on pending lawsuits. She confirmed that Soliman was an anesthesiologist with a faculty appointment from 2000 to 2006.

None of the individual defendants named in the complaint responded to requests for comment. Their attorneys also did not return calls from The Hatchet.

"They really protect their own," said Soliman's attorney Lynne Bernabei, referring to anesthesiologists in the hospital. "It's a relatively powerful department in the Medical School. They're all well protected so when there is something like this when there's injustice or discrimination, there's nobody who's going to do anything about it."

Following the death of a patient recovering from surgery in the intensive care unit on Sept. 4, 2006, Berrigan and anesthesiology professor Ronald Guritzky sent a letter to the hospital medical director blaming Soliman for the accidental death.

The medical director then suspended Soliman's medical privileges at the hospital. She was later reinstated by an internal review committee, but was subjected to a peer review performed by Guritzky.

In late 2006, Soliman sought employment at two separate hospitals. Both rejected her because of reported criticism from officials at GW, the complaint said.

In another instance of alleged discrimination, Soliman said she was "involved in a near-fatal car accident," and reported she was going to be late to work, according to the complaint. Professor Paul Dangerfield called her the next day and "told her in a threatening tone of voice that she had to be at work

by 9:30 a.m.," the complaint said.

The complaint detailed that over the course of four years, Soliman contacted Berrigan dozens of times to report discrimination, and found they took more discriminatory action against her in retaliation - especially after her attorney sent a letter to the University.

Soliman's complaint states that after she reported the discrimination to Berrigan and James Scott, dean of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the hospital did not take any action to remedy the situation.

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