

Schedule of Newspaper articles

No.	Date	Publication	Author	Headline
1	22 May 2005	<i>The Sunday Mail</i>	David Murray	"Spy camera operation targets shamed medico: Banned doctor caught working at clinic"
2	13 May 2005	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Leanne Edmystone	"Misdiagnosis led to addiction: Doctor with dementia found liable"
3	10 May 2005	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Leanne Edmystone	"Psychiatrist barred over sex with ex-patient"
4	5 May 2005	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Leanne Edmystone	"Doctor cleared of charges over mental patient action"
5	1 May 2005	<i>The Sunday Mail</i>	David Murray	"Two years on, hearing into psychiatrist still not convened: Case delay anger"
				"Doctor ban 'restricted by rule'"
6	3 April 2005	<i>The Sunday Mail</i>	David Murray	"Doctor suspended on poor-conduct charges: Father of porn baron accused of groping female patients"
7	24 March 2005	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Ryan Heffernan	"Mum prepared for death after wrong diagnosis"

No.	Date	Publication	Author	Headline
8	23 March 2005	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	No author listed- in Fast News	"Post-op problems"
9	16 November 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Tanya Moore	"Surgeon restricted after porn offence"
10	9 November 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Hedley Thomas	"Doctor's lethal shift: Abolish 24-hour roster: judge"
11	9 October 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Mark Oberhardt	"Would be candidate fails to kill sex case"
12	21 August 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Michael McKenna	"Therapist banned for seduction"
13	31 July 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Hedley Thomas	"How the system failed this little girl"
14	13 May 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Sandra McLean	"Bad medicine scars career"
15	6 May 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Hedley Thomas	"Banned medico defeats ruling"
16	14 April 2004	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Hedley Thomas	"Death turns focus on hospitals"

No.	Date	Publication	Author	Headline
17	Undated	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Kay Dibben	"The Queensland doctor who prescribed stimulants for truckies"
18	18 September 2003	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Dr Robert Stabile, director-general Queensland Health commenting on Madonna King's article (number 19 below)	"Actions had to be fair"
19	16 September 2003	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Madonna King	"Daughter's death in vain"
20	10 September 2003	<i>The Australian</i>	Jamie Walker	"Faith healer fights on: a firebrand doctor is at the heart of a controversial heroin therapy"
21	19 August 2003	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Greg Stolz	"Romancing GP returns to work as ban lifted"
22	5 July 2003	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Mark Oberhardt and Leanne Edmestone	"Neurosurgeon suspension could delay operations"
23	28 June 2003	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	Cath Hart	"Doctor free to ply drug remedy"

Mr Morris has moved to partially sideline a deputy commissioner, Sir Llew Edwards, from matters concerning the Medical Board of Queensland because a company which he directed handled their media and crisis management during the Dr Death furor.

Staff have also been seconded to the inquiry from Attorney-General Rod Welford's department as well as the Crown Solicitor's office.

Bar Association president Glenn Martin, SC, said Mr Andrews, son of the late former chief justice Dormer Andrews, was "well qualified for the task".

— the commissioner can work closely with the senior counsel assisting, or he can sit back and ask that the evidence be presented."

Mr Morris said yesterday he hoped to start public hearings in Brisbane on May 23, with two to three weeks of sittings, before moving the inquiry to Bundaberg, where Jayant Patel was employed as Bundaberg Hospital's director of surgery.

Dr Patel has been linked to the deaths of more than 20 patients who died prematurely or unnecessarily before *The Courier-Mail* uncovered evidence in the US of his gross negligence in surgery in hospitals there.

Doctor cleared of charges over mental patient action

Leanne Edmestone

A QUEENSLAND doctor has been cleared of charges she forcibly drugged a patient and admitted her to a Brisbane mental hospital.

Lamorna Osborne had been accused by the Medical Board of Queensland of not relying on independent medical evidence in ordering the regulated admission of Gold Coast mother-of-two Marietta Richini to Belmont Private Hospital in May 1997.

She was also charged with acting inappropriately by injecting Mrs Richini with a cocktail of drugs and breaching doctor-patient confidentiality by supplying documents to her former de facto partner Giovanni Cingia.

She admitted the breach of confidentiality.

In a written judgment handed down yesterday, Judge Michael Forde found Dr Osborne was a caring practitioner with imperfect record-keeping, and the board had failed to prove her actions in ordering the patient's admission amounted to unsatisfactory professional conduct.

The tribunal was told Dr Osborne, who specialised in postnatal depression and had postgraduate qualifications in anaesthetics, had treated



CLINICAL judgment found to be sound . . . Dr Lamorna Osborne.

Mrs Richini since 1991, and for depression since 1993.

In 1997, after the birth of Mrs Richini's second child, Dr Osborne became concerned her condition was deteriorating and that this might endanger the child.

Expert medical evidence and cross-examination satisfied the tribunal that Dr Osborne's clinical judgment was sound and she had acted in a responsible and professional manner.

Judge Forde ordered Dr Osborne be reprimanded and pay \$5000 for the breach of confidentiality.

THE COURIER MAIL

EDITION:

515105

Mum prepared for death after wrong diagnosis

Ryan Heffernan

BERYL Crosby began mentally planning her own funeral last year after she says a doctor at a Queensland hospital diagnosed her with secondary liver cancer.

The mother of two from Bundaberg speaks of memories of endless medical tests, trying to console her two devastated daughters and a grandson who was begging her not to go away.

Only Ms Crosby wasn't dying — there was no cancer.

The 49-year-old said last night she had been satisfied to write the whole thing off as a bad mistake, until it emerged that the same surgeon whom she claims misdiagnosed her had been accused of incompetence involving at least 14 other patients.

"It was January 27 (2004) and it was hell from then on," Ms Crosby claims.

"But the hell my family was put through was the worst." The allegations centre around a "Dr Patel" from the Bundaberg Base Hospital and were controversially aired in Queensland



ALL clear . . . Beryl Crosby in a happy moment with her daughter Katie after finding she does not have cancer.

Parliament by sitting Nationals member Rob Messenger on Tuesday.

Using information contained in a leaked letter from a nurse in the intensive care unit, Mr Messenger raised allegations that 14 patients at the hospital had suffered serious complications and one died following surgery involving Dr Patel.

AMA Queensland president

David Molloy confirmed "the doctor in question" had been investigated by the chief health officer and the matter had been referred to the medical board.

Ms Crosby claims her GP sent her to Brisbane, where in May, she was cleared of cancer and diagnosed with hemangiomas.

Ms Crosby said last night she had made a formal complaint about Dr Patel.

The Courier-Mail Wednesday, March 23, 2005+

FAST NEWS

HEALTH

Post-op problems

FOURTEEN patients at the Bundaberg Base Hospital had died or suffered serious complications following surgery because of an incompetent surgeon, State Parliament was told yesterday. The Opposition yesterday tabled a leaked letter written by an intensive care unit nurse calling for a formal investigation into one of the hospital's surgeons. The nurse alleged the post-operative complication rate for the surgeon's patients was extremely high, with several developing major health problems resulting in unplanned hospital readmissions and, in at least one case, death. Opposition health spokesman Stuart Copeland said the chief health officer had investigated the claims, and called on Health Minister Gordon Nuttall to release the findings. Mr Nuttall told State Parliament he was not aware of the claims but it would be a matter for the Medical Board of Queensland.

Surgeon restricted after porn offence

Tanya Moore

A SURGEON convicted of Internet child pornography offences will continue practising at a central Queensland hospital but will be banned from treating patients under the age of 18.

William Joseph Fitzgerald, 42, who practises at the Pioneer Valley Hospital in Mackay, was charged with possessing 120 images of boys, some engaged in sexual activity, between four and 15 years old.

Dr Fitzgerald pleaded guilty in the Mackay Magistrate's Court last Friday to two counts of possessing and one count of copying child-abuse computer games. He was fined \$2000.

Queensland Medical Board executive officer Jim O'Dempsey said the doctor had agreed to restrictions being placed on his practice as a result of the charges.

"We have taken action against his registration status and he has offered an undertaking to the board, which the board has accepted. He cannot practise or provide medical services to anyone under the age of 18," Mr O'Dempsey said.

He said the board had "made the determination" that Dr Fitzgerald was "a risk to the public" and an investigation into possible future disciplinary measures would now take place.

He said the investigation could take up to five weeks.

Dr Fitzgerald had been practising without restrictions up until last week, despite the charges.

Mr O'Dempsey said the board had "issued a show cause notice to Dr Fitzgerald as to why it should not impose conditions or suspend his registration" when they became aware of the child porn charges through media.

He said it was not compulsory for a medical practitioner to inform the board if charges were laid against them until they were found guilty or if there was a criminal indictment against them.

Police discovered images of boys, some involved in sexual activity, on Dr Fitzgerald's laptop on September 24.

Michael Springer, Dr Fitzgerald's solicitor, told the court the surgeon came across websites containing the images after receiving unsolicited e-mails.

— Additional reporting AAP

Would-be candidate fails to kill sex case

Mark Oberhardt

A PSYCHIATRIST forced to withdraw his National Party candidacy for today's federal election after a sex scandal involving a former patient will face disciplinary action after losing an appeal yesterday.

In December last year, Rockhampton psychiatrist Christopher John Alroe was found guilty by the Health Practitioners Tribunal of unsatisfactory professional conduct for a relationship with a former patient.

It was alleged the woman, a 52-year-old registered nurse, was treated by Dr Alroe for almost a decade after being diagnosed with a bipolar disorder.

Dr Alroe, 50, ended her treatment after her condition improved in August 1998, and it was alleged the two later had sex four times up until April 2000.

Dr Alroe, a former state chairman of the Australian Doctors Fund, former flying doctor and part-time playwright, was criticised by the tribunal for preying on his former patient's vulnerability.

"The complainant here was a lonely and vulnerable lady, flattered by the attention of an intelligent man who shared her interests in literature and writing," the tribunal said in its ruling.



Scandal...
Chris Alroe.

Dr Alroe claimed the woman had been stalking him for "approximately 12 years" and that the allegations of a sexual relationship were a figment of her imagination.

The tribunal delayed any punishment until an appeal could be heard.

Dr Alroe relied on 25 grounds for his appeal, with the central issue being the tribunal's acceptance of the complainant's credibility.

Court of Appeal president Justice Margaret McMurdo said an appeal from the tribunal's findings to the Court of Appeal could only be brought on questions of law.

"So Dr Alroe has a difficult task demonstrating that his appeal is on a question of law," she said.

Justice McMurdo said Dr Alroe had not demonstrated any appealable question of law which would give the court jurisdiction to hear his appeal, and his appeal should be dismissed.

Justice Glen Williams agreed the appeal should be dismissed, and said there was ample evidence confirming the allegations of the complainant.

The third judge, Justice Peter Dutney, also agreed, and added the overall effect of the evidence before the tribunal provided cogent support for the complainant's account.

Dr Alroe last year confirmed to *The Courier-Mail* he had withdrawn his nomination to contest the federal seat of Capricornia because of the alleged sex scandal.

THE COURIER MAIL

EDITION : 9/10/04

Therapist banned for

Michael McKenna

ONE of Queensland's leading psychiatrists has been suspended from practice and forced to withdraw his National Party candidacy for the next federal election after a sex scandal involving a former patient. Christopher Alroe, a Rockhampton-based psychiatrist, was found guilty by the Health Practitioners Tribunal of professional misconduct for seducing a patient only weeks after he discharged her from therapy.

The woman, a 52-year-old regis-

tered nurse, had been treated by Dr Alroe for almost a decade after being diagnosed with a bi-polar disorder.

Dr Alroe, 50, who had nominated to contest the Labor-held seat of Capricornia, ended her treatment after her condition improved in August 1998 and then embarked on a coffee-shop courtship that led to the pair having sex four times up until April 2000.

The tribunal slammed Dr Alroe, a former state chairman of the Australian Doctors Fund, former Flying Doctor and part-time play-

wright, for preying on his former patient's vulnerability.

"The complainant here was a lonely and vulnerable lady, flattered by the attention of an intelligent man who shared her interests in literature and writing," the tribunal said in its ruling.

"Given her history of illness and the strong possibility of recurrence or relapse, the registrant (Dr Alroe) had an added responsibility to maintain professional boundaries."

The pair both worked at the Rockhampton Hospital where, at

one stage, he was director of Adult Mental Health services.

Dr Alroe claimed the woman had been stalking him for "approximately 12 years" and that the allegations of a sexual relationship were a figment of her imagination.

Judge Kerry O'Brien said telephone records and witnesses supported her claims of late-night calls around the time of their sexual encounters and party invites from the renowned psychiatrist.

The woman said they had sex at his Rockhampton home, in the pool of her home and then, after

seduction

she left the central Queensland town, at her unit in Toowoomba.

The woman told the tribunal she had been flattered by Dr Alroe's interest in her and that it was the first time she had had sex in almost a decade during their first encounter.

Dr Alroe yesterday refused to discuss the ruling, which is now before the Court of Appeal.

But before issuing a statement to *The Courier-Mail*, Dr Alroe confirmed he had withdrawn his nomination to contest the federal seat of Capricornia because of the sex scandal.

"The matter is subject to appeal before the Queensland Court of Appeal and it is extremely dangerous to publish material or make comments while the matter is under consideration," he said in the statement.

"The matter relates to an alleged relationship which commenced six months after therapy."

"I strongly deny the allegations and will continue to fight the matter through all the appropriate legal channels available."

The tribunal will decide on Dr Alroe's punishment, if any, after the Court of Appeal delivers its findings.



HOPE pinned on appeal ... Christopher Alroe.

THE COURIER MAIL

EDITION : 21/8/04

How the system failed this little girl

Hedley Thomas

AN inquiry into the death of a Brisbane child has made damning findings about a "culture of non-care" in a Queensland public hospital.

The Health Rights Commission inquiry found the death of Elise Neville, 10, was a senseless tragedy, arguably due to the unsatisfactory culture at Caloundra Hospital.

Its confidential report, which was considered by Queensland Health director-general Steve Buckland and Elise's parents Dr Gerard and Lorraine Neville last week, identifies serious shortcomings in a case which doctors fear will have major ramifications.

"Elise Neville's tragic death has highlighted significant systemic issues at Caloundra Hospital," HRC Commissioner David Kerslake said.

"I find there was a lack of awareness among at least some staff of the hospital's capacity and obligation to provide an appropriate level of care for children who presented.

"Although nothing will ever erase the pain that Dr and Mrs Neville obviously feel at losing Elise, it is my hope that the changes made as a consequence to Elise's untimely death might provide some purpose to what must seem to be a senseless loss."

Caloundra Hospital had a practice of not admitting children nor permitting them to be kept in a ward for observation when Elise was taken there.

The practice was altered shortly after the death of Elise, who suffered a treatable head injury in a fall from a bunk bed but later died.

Public hospital doctors were angered by Queensland Health and the Medical Board's unprecedented move to prosecute a junior colleague, Andrew Doneman, over the death of Elise two years ago.

The Australian Medical Association and the College of Emergency Medicine accused the Medical Board of using the doctor as a scapegoat for Queensland Health's "unsafe practices".

Dr Doneman had been working 19 hours of a 24-hour shift as the sole doctor-in-charge at Caloundra Hospital when Elise was brought in to the emergency department by her parents at 3.20am.

Dr Doneman, who had less than two years' experience as a medical practitioner, told the parents her head injury was not serious and that it was not necessary or worth



Banned medico defeats ruling

Hedley Thomas

A DOCTOR who has fought the Medical Board of Queensland over action to prevent her from practising for five years has been significantly vindicated in an Ombudsman's report.

However, Dr Christina Wong, 31, whose campaign to highlight her case brought her in conflict with former health minister Wendy Edmond, will not be able to return to work immediately.

Assistant Ombudsman Greg Woodbury found there had been maladministration and deficient supervision by the Medical Board, which is responsible for registering and investigating medical practitioners in Queensland.

His report sets out a series of deficiencies by the Medical Board which "failed to adequately supervise or monitor your health and performance".

Dr Wong's problems arose when she had suffered major stress and psychological problems and was prescribed antidepressants and other drugs.

After an evaluation by her psychiatrist she was permitted to work in the Inala Health Centre general practice in a placement approved by the Medical Board-administered Health Assessment and Monitoring Program.

The program, for regulated doctors with drug, health or psychological issues, is meant to involve close supervision by senior doctors but the Ombudsman's Office found this did not occur.

Dr Wong made mistakes while treating patients and she was referred to the Medical Tribunal, which in October 2002 decided that her registration should be cancelled for at least five years.

The Assistant Ombudsman found Dr Wong treated patients and made mistakes, including drug prescriptions and incorrect diagnosis, some time after serious concerns had been raised by her supervising doctor at the Inala practice.

He said the Medical Board should have taken more decisive action about "concerns regarding your ongoing conduct, your actions and your health".

The report also found that Dr Wong contributed to the problem because of her reluctance to comply with the program.

The Medical Board, which has a statutory requirement to uphold professional standards and protect the public by ensuring safe health care, has since improved its program for impaired doctors.

Dr Wong, who has been studying law, said yesterday she welcomed the report and was considering her legal options.

THE COURIER MAIL

EDITION : 6105104

Actions had to be fair

I WRITE concerning Madonna King's column (Perspectives, Sept 16) about the very tragic death of 11-year-old Elise Neville last year.

The article gives the completely wrong impression about Queensland Health's response to Elise's death. It is true that Elise's father, Dr Gerard Neville, is an employee of Queensland Health and that he has been a colleague of mine since we commenced university together more than 30 years ago.

It was as a colleague and not as director-general of Queensland Health that I attended Elise's funeral and visited the Nevilles at their home.

However, as well as being personally concerned for a colleague and his family, as director-general I needed to ensure that my professional actions be rigorously and scrupulously fair to all parties involved in the matter.

I properly advised the Nevilles to refer their concerns to the three independent statutory authorities which have jurisdiction in this area: the Health Rights Commission, the Medical Board of Queensland and the Queensland Nursing Council.

These authorities are independent of Queensland Health in the same way the Crime and Misconduct Commission is independent of the police. It would be

improper for me to attempt to influence the outcome of a Health Rights Commission investigation, or that of the Medical Board or Nursing Council. It should be noted that the matter is also before the Coroner.

King suggests there is a lack of accountability in the investigation of Elise's death. Accountability extends to journalism as well. At no stage did King seek any comment from myself. Had she spoken to me in the preparation of the article I could have clarified the role of Queensland Health, the statutory and independent bodies and myself in the investigation.
— Dr Robert Stable,
director-general, Queensland Health.

THE COURIER MAIL

EDITION : 18/9 / 03

The Queensland doctor who prescribed stimulants for truckies

EXCLUSIVE

By KAY DIBBEN

A SUNSHINE Coast doctor who prescribed stimulants to long-distance truckies has incensed medical colleagues by suggesting many other doctors are doing the same.

Australian Medical Association Queensland president Ingrid Tall said it was not standard practice for doctors to prescribe stimulants to truckies to prevent fatigue.

"We need safe working hours for truckies, just like we have for doctors and pilots - we don't need stimulants," Dr Tall said.

Cooroy doctor David Kirkman last month at the Health Practitioners Tribunal pleaded guilty to unsatisfactory conduct for prescribing weight-loss tablets and other stimulants to long-distance truck-driving patients to prevent sleepiness.

He was ordered to undergo counselling and his right to prescribe three drugs, including ephedrine, will be restricted and supervised.

Transport Workers Union state secretary Hughie Williams said the doctor received "a slap on the wrist" for doing something that could have led to the death of a driver.

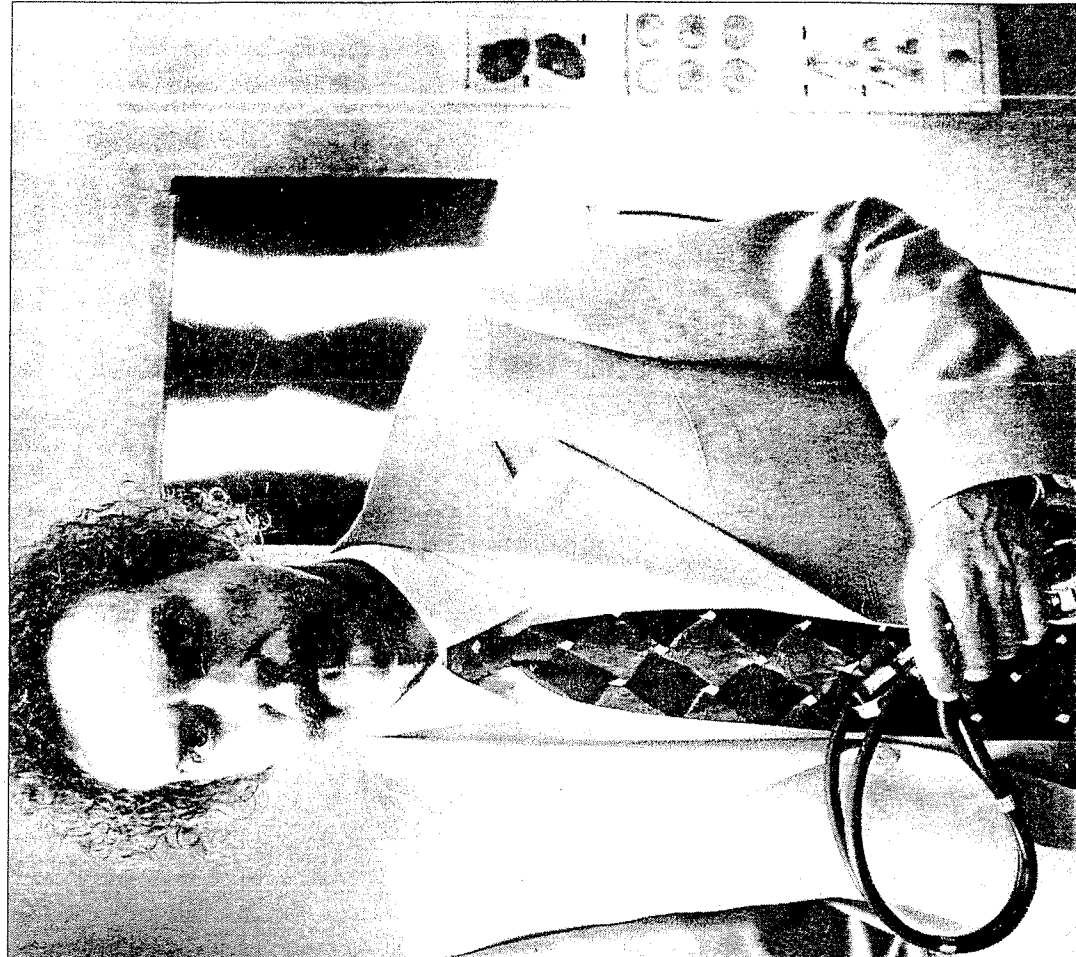
He has asked Premier Peter Beattie to hold a summit to find out if other doctors are prescribing anti-fatigue pills to truckies.

Since his hearing Dr Kirkman has said his own survey of rural doctors, conducted before his hearing, showed that 82 per cent of the 157 who responded also prescribed the weight-loss pill Diuromine to prevent fatigue.

But some doctors who received the survey have reacted angrily, saying that it was skewed to manipulate the outcome and most doctors did not prescribe stimulants.

Dr Kirkman says he prescribed the drugs to prevent his truckie patients from

I'm not the only one!



SUPERVISED: Dr David Kirkman has upset the Australian Medical Association

obtaining illegal drugs on the black market.

"This is a concept which many find hard to swallow, but it kept my three patients alive and is a viewpoint shared by some of my colleagues," he said.

"It's all very well to say, 'Pull over and have a sleep,' but in reality this just does not happen."

He believes there should be a clinical trial to see if stimulants such as Diuromine could be prescribed to prevent fatigue.

Dr Tall said that most doctors would refuse emphatically if someone asked for ephedrine or a truckie requested a stimulant.

"We could prescribe heroin to patients to prevent doctor."

At Dr Kirkman's tribunal hearing, Judge Deborah Richards said it was quite clear that the prescription of drugs to patients for no medical reason, and for reasons for which the drugs were not to be used, was unacceptable behavior by the doctor.

Judge Richards said that Dr Kirkman prescribed amphetamine-like pills to three patients over eight years despite having Health Department advice that it was inappropriate.

"The prescription of these drugs was potentially dangerous," she said.

It had encouraged his patients to drive long

Picture: SHARYN ROSEWARNE

distances when they knew they shouldn't.

Dr Wayne Herdy, of the Sunshine Coast Local Medical Association, said drugs such as Diuromine were recommended only for short-term appetite suppression and they had a chemical stimulant effect which could cause hallucinations and impair driver concentration.

Death turns focus on

Hedley Thomas

A PUBLIC hospital doctor is being prosecuted over the death of the young daughter of a Queensland Health senior medical officer.

The case is expected to highlight shortcomings in the health system.

The Medical Board of Queensland has referred the case to the Health Practitioners Tribunal for a formal hearing.

The board investigated the case after intense lobbying by 10-year-old Elise Neville's parents, Dr Gerard Neville and wife Lorraine.

Elise was on holiday with her family on the Sunshine Coast in January 2002 when she fell out of

a bunk bed and hit her head. She vomited and her parents took her to the Caloundra Hospital emergency department where she was seen by Dr Andrew Doneman.

Dr Doneman did not admit her to hospital or perform tests which would have demonstrated a serious head injury.

After going home Elise's condition deteriorated. She was taken by helicopter to the Royal Brisbane Hospital but did not regain consciousness. Her life support was turned off two days after the fall.

It was later found she had suffered a fractured skull and internal bleeding.

In its formal notification to the

tribunal, the Medical Board said: "The (doctor) failed in the circumstances presented to adequately determine the patient's condition."

Dr Doneman has declined to comment.

Australian Medical Association Queensland president David Molloy said he was astounded that the matter had been referred to the tribunal.

"It is one of those tragic issues that brings everything to account: the system, the junior doctor at the end of a very long shift in a small hospital, the lack of supervision and the protocols," Dr Molloy said.

"He is a good doctor, caught in a

very difficult clinical situation on his own in a small hospital, and he followed the rules.

"It's almost unknown for questions of clinical judgment to be referred to the tribunal.

"There is significant concern that in any hearing (of this case) the system itself will be under scrutiny and, if so, Queensland Health will have to take a good hard look at its systems."

Dr Doneman has also been told by Queensland Health that as a result of a separate agreement with the AMAQ last year his legal expenses will not be covered unless he is cleared, resulting in an outcry by hospital doctors who

hospitals

fear being "hung out to dry".

Dr Molloy said AMAQ was negotiating a review of the policy.

Dr Neville and his wife met Health Minister Gordon Nuttall yesterday to express concern over what they believe are serious issues compromising public safety in Queensland Health.

Dr Neville said that in relation to his daughter the Medical Board had "found sufficient evidence of unsatisfactory professional conduct".

"The basis for its findings was a lack of competence, which was what we always said. Slowly but surely, all the vindication is coming," Dr Neville said.

"This was an urgent presentation in the middle of the night to an emergency department in a public hospital that led to a death."

Dr Neville said under normal circumstances the complaints system would be impenetrable for most people without a medical background.

In its notification, the Medical Board said Elise had a persistent headache, was "combative" and could not be calmed during the consultation. She had a bruise and swelling on her left temple.

The board said Dr Doneman, in his clinical notes, wrote that Elise was "poorly compliant" and that he was "unable to fully assess" her actual condition.

Romancing GP returns to work as ban lifted

Greg Stolz

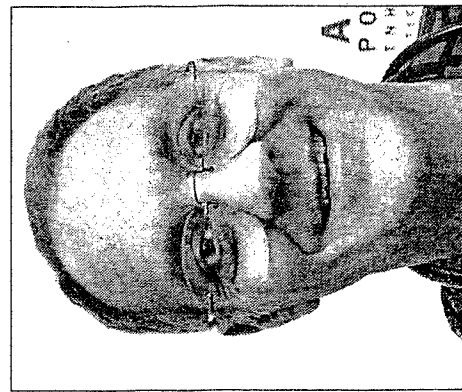
GOLD COAST BUREAU CHIEF

A GOLD Coast GP, twice suspended for having sexual relationships with patients, is back in the surgery — but Dr Gary Martin says his days of romancing patients are behind him.

"I've learnt my lesson and besides, I'm now happily married," he said yesterday.

Dr Martin recently completed a two-year suspension for having a sexual relationship with a female patient in 1994-95.

It followed a one-year ban in 1998 for an 11-year de facto relationship he started with another woman patient in 1983.



SETTLED ... Dr Gary Martin reinstated after a two-year ban.

That relationship was blasted by Medical Assessment Tribunal President Judge George Fryberg as "torrid and tempestuous" and a "selfish love founded primarily on sexual desire".

More than 1000 of his patients rallied in support of the then bachelor doctor who said he had started the relationship because he was lonely.

Patients also turned out in force for his second appearance before the Medical Assessment Tribunal, in 2001 — crying out "oh no" after the two-year ban was handed down.

That hearing was sparked after a woman complained to the Medical Board of Queensland after seeing a TV current affairs show in which some of Dr Martin's patients denied he had relationships with women.

Dr Martin has now resumed practice at a medical centre at Arundel on the northern Gold Coast.

He said he had given away solo practice but was invited to join a medical centre by another doctor "who agrees that I got a raw deal from the Medical Board".

"The location is good because it's far enough away from my former surgery to get rid of the old memories but close enough to keep in touch with my old patients," Dr Martin said.

"Many of my patients have stayed loyal and are coming back."

Dr Martin said he had considered giving medicine away during his latest ban.

"I looked at other options but when you're 58 with nothing more than a medical degree, you find it pretty tough to get a job," he said.

The sabbatical, he said, had done him the world of good.

He said he had travelled extensively and also got married — to Jacquelyn, whom he met over the Internet.

"We married in August 2001 and no, Jacquelyn is not a former patient," he said.

"My days of having relationships with patients are long gone. I've come back with a whole new lease of life."

A former long-time patient of Dr Martin's, Shirley Holmes, said she was glad to hear the doctor was back.

"My husband and I were patients of his for more than 20 years and he was just wonderful," she said.

"He really didn't deserve the treatment he got from the medical authorities and it's great to hear he's practising again."

The Health Practitioner Registration Boards executive officer Jim O'Dempsey said special conditions were sometimes placed on doctors who returned after suspension but no such conditions had been applied to Dr Martin.

THE COURIER-MAIL

EDITION: 19/08/03

Neurosurgeon suspension could delay operations

Mark Oberhardt and
Leanne Edmiston

THE suspension of a leading brain surgeon would highlight a shortage of neurosurgeons and delay some operations, a Brisbane court was told yesterday.

Marshall Cooke, QC, was making submissions after the Court of Appeal ordered his client, Dr Michael Coroneos, serve a three-month suspension for breaching working restrictions placed on him by the Medical Board of Queensland.

It was the latest setback for Dr Coroneos, often described as a brilliant brain surgeon, in his battle with health authorities since he was jailed for Medibank fraud in January 1994.

After Justice John Jerrard delivered yesterday's judgment, Mr Cooke asked for time to consider whether Dr Coroneos would make an application for a permanent stay of the order.

Mr Cooke said it needed to be made clear when the suspension would



MICHAEL Coroneos ...
suspension ordered.

begin because of his client's heavy work commitments and need to relocate patients waiting for surgery.

He said he understood there was a shortage of neurosurgeons in Brisbane at the moment and it could cause problems.

But Neurosurgical Society of Australasia president Glenn

McCulloch yesterday said there "probably" wasn't a shortage of neurosurgeons but the medical indemnity fallout could force resignations in the next few months.

Mr McCulloch said he believed there were about 12 neurosurgeons operating in Brisbane, three on the Gold Coast, two in Townsville and one in Rockhampton.

Justice Jerrard gave each party 21 days in which to apply for a stay or clarification of the suspension order.

Dr Coroneos has been battling the Medical Board since he was released in mid-1994 after serving three months of a jail term for Medibank fraud.

After his conviction, the board charged him with professional misconduct and took Dr Coroneos before the Medical Assessment Tribunal which suspended him for 12 months.

A continuing legal battle has been fought over whether Dr Coroneos breached a number of conditions imposed by the board upon his re-admission to practise.

THE COURIER-MAIL

EDITION: 05/07/03