

Doctors who spoke out
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All over the nation, physicians who have spoken out about dangerous hospital practices or poor performance by colleagues have been punished. Here are a few examples.

Dr. Gregory Flynn, Sarasota, Fla.

Flynn, a board-certified anesthesiologist and specialist in treating pain, had worked at Sarasota Memorial public hospital for six years in 1994 when his admitting privileges were suspended and later revoked, despite a medical executive committee vote to reinstate him. The actions came after Flynn criticized the hospital for poor training of staff, unsafe conditions, lack of supplies and other problems. When Flynn sued the hospital, a jury awarded him \$8.6 million in May 1999, an amount later reduced to \$6.5 million in a settlement agreement. A hospital attorney says it disagrees with the verdict.

Drs. Morton Burrell, Arthur Rosenfield and Robert C. Smith, New Haven, Conn.

The three radiologists at Yale-New Haven Medical Center protested a new department chief's policies which they said had "the potential to cause serious harm to patients." Their accusations included understaffing, having untrained staff read X-rays, and rushing diagnostic reports at the expense of accuracy. Over the next two years, Smith's and Burrell's salaries were cut, and Smith was cited for his "reluctance to cooperate in the evolutionary process of change." The three now have a lawsuit pending against the university, which "disagrees completely with their characterization of events," a Yale spokeswoman said.

Dr. Kyle Bressler, Naples, Fla.

Bressler, an ear, nose and throat specialist, reached a settlement in July with Naples Medical Center in his \$3 million whistleblower lawsuit for what he said was retaliation against him. Bressler had complained about errors in the hospital laboratory and he reported that nasal scopes were not being properly sterilized before reuse, even though they were sometimes used with AIDS patients. When patients were not notified, Bressler told state authorities. In response, the center, which is owned and operated by a group of about 20 physicians, doubled Bressler's overhead expenses and he stopped getting referrals. Naples Medical fired Bressler in the spring of 2002, prompting his lawsuit. "It's all lies. That's my only comment," hospital administrator Richard Estes said.