

## Pathologist in G20 demonstration death is suspended for “irresponsible” conduct in earlier case

Clare Dyer

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Freddy Patel, the pathologist who wrongly concluded that the first victim of the “Camden Ripper” had died of a heart attack during consensual sex, has been suspended from the UK medical register for four months.

The General Medical Council was told that Dr Patel’s “irresponsible” conduct of postmortem examinations on the body of 31 year old prostitute Sally White in 2002 might have hampered the police investigation into the activities of Anthony Hardy, who went on to kill two other women in Camden, north London.

The case was not concerned with Dr Patel’s role in the investigation into the death of newspaper seller Ian Tomlinson at the G20 demonstration in April 2009. He concluded Mr Tomlinson had died of natural causes linked to coronary artery disease, but two other pathologists, who carried out further examinations after it emerged that Mr Tomlinson had been struck by a police baton, concluded that the cause of death was blunt force trauma combined with cirrhosis of the liver.

The GMC panel found Dr Patel guilty of misconduct and deficient professional performance in carrying out the postmortem examinations on Sally White, and of dishonesty in submitting an inaccurate CV to the GMC and giving untruthful evidence at a GMC hearing in August 2010.

The panel concluded that he had not taken account of relevant factors, including blood stains on Ms White’s bedding and clothes or the location and position of her body in a locked room in the flat of a man who had recently been arrested by the police.

He had an “inflexible approach” to his autopsy conclusions and gave “superficial” consideration to the possibility that she had been asphyxiated.

The panel accepted that he had taken steps to address the deficiencies in his practice and that his dishonesty was at the lower end of the spectrum but felt that suspension was necessary because it could not identify conditions that could be imposed on his registration to address dishonesty.

He was suspended for three months by the GMC last September for “irresponsible” postmortem examinations on a 5 year old girl, a 4 month old baby, and an older woman. The panel in that case imposed a number of conditions, including mentoring, peer review, improving his knowledge, and limiting his practice to postmortem examinations of adults who die in non-suspicious circumstances.

Vickie Isaac, who chaired the panel in the Sally White case, said Dr Patel’s efforts to improve his performance had gone “some way” towards addressing concerns, but more would have to be done for the panel to be satisfied that his clinical abilities were of a sufficient standard to practise unrestricted. His case will be reviewed before the suspension ends, when he will have to produce evidence that he has taken a range of remedial steps.

Dr Patel is expected to give evidence at the inquest into the death of Mr Tomlinson, which began on 29 March.

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