



NEWS

Cardiologist is cleared of sexual assault charges

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The BMJ

A consultant cardiologist has been cleared of sexually assaulting three women during medical examinations at Lewisham Hospital in southeast London.

Sumit Basu, 59, was acquitted at Woolwich Crown Court in London of seven charges of sexual assault and three charges of assault by penetration against the three women between 2006 and 2014.

Allegations were first made to police in March 2016 by a second year medical student, who claimed that Basu touched her breasts on the first appointment and on the fourth appointment inserted his gloved fingers into her vagina. The two other women came forward after media coverage of his arrest.

The prosecution told the jury that the first woman to complain had initially been referred to Basu because she had palpitations and chest pains and was later examined internally after saying that she had been having urinary infections.

In one case he accepted that he had performed a rectal examination but said that he did so only after the woman complained of stomach problems.

Basu, who qualified in India in 1983, told the jury that he was “shocked” and “absolutely devastated” by the accusations. He said he felt under “enormous pressure” from the police to remember things that had happened years before.

He accepted that rectal examinations were rare in cardiology clinics but told jurors, “You have to have a feel. You have to be a whole doctor.” He added, “Medicine is a continuum. You cannot practise it in isolation.”

Basu had conditions imposed on his medical registration on an interim basis in May 2016, including a ban on consultations with female patients without a chaperone except in life threatening emergencies. His registration was suspended on an interim basis in March 2017.