



The BMJ

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;373:n987<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n987>

Published: 16 April 2021

Covid-19: Irish GP who refused to vaccinate patients is suspended

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An Irish GP who refused to vaccinate his patients against SARS-CoV-2 and referred to media information about the pandemic as “propaganda” and a “hoax” has been suspended from the medical register by the High Court of Ireland.

Ms Justice Mary Irvine, president of the High Court, temporarily suspended Gerard Waters, 71, pending a disciplinary hearing by the Medical Council of Ireland after a complaint by a patient. The patient alleged that he was told that the practice could not refer patients for covid-19 testing and that he found a photocopied document headed “No pandemic killing us” in the waiting room. He claimed that Waters suggested that his mask might be causing his symptoms and that the numbers of deaths from covid-19 were being “cooked.”

Waters, a sole practitioner at the Whitethorn Clinic in Celbridge, County Kildare, stated in his response to the council that he believed the lockdown had caused more damage to the people of Ireland than the virus, “which is now generally accepted worldwide to have a pathogenicity and mortality similar to a winter flu.”

He wrote, “From my experience of my patients on the front line since March 2020, I estimate that between 1% and 10% of the Irish population have suffered from a serious traumatic stress disorder, depression and suicidal ideation as a direct result of the government instigated media propaganda and lockdown, which works out at between 48 000 and 480 000 people of this country. This must be seen as a national tragedy, if not a massive crime against the Irish people, perhaps the worst since the great famine which was committed by the British government.”

Council rules provide for an application to the High Court if the council believes that a doctor’s suspension pending disciplinary proceedings is necessary to protect the public. Hearings are usually in private.

The council decided to apply to the court on the grounds that Waters, who described himself as a “conscientious objector,” would not administer the vaccine; that the practice did not comply with public health measures such as the wearing of masks; that he had not referred a single patient for a covid-19 test; and that he was undermining the public health message by his comments to patients.

Waters offered undertakings, including to provide information facilitating vaccination and to refer patients with covid-19 symptoms to other practices, but Irvine ruled that these did not go far enough and ordered the suspension in a judgment given in private in early March.

After the order was made, a banner appeared on the clinic’s wall stating, “Dr Waters has been suspended from the medical register because he refused to give the covid-19 vaccine and objected to the covid-19 lockdowns.”

The council returned to court, arguing that the banner misrepresented the basis for the order and asking for the judgment to be published and the banner removed. Irvine granted both requests, and the judgment has now been published.¹

The council said in a statement, “In circumstances where the council understands that an appeal to the Court of Appeal against the suspension has now been issued on behalf of Dr Waters and where this matter is still being considered by the Medical Council under Part 7 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, the Medical Council will not be making further comment.”

¹ Medical Council v Dr Gerard Waters. [2021] IEHC 252. <https://www.bailii.org/ie/cases/IEHC/2021/2021IEHC252.html>.