

On March 26, 2015, my husband and I found out that we are expecting triplets after several years of complications with infertility. During our doctor's appointment we were told that we would need to have a consult with a physician that works with high-risk pregnancies. I was scheduled for a high-risk consult on May 22, 2015 at Women and Children's Hospital in Charleston, West Virginia.

Upon review of the information mailed to me from the Women and Children's high-risk clinic, I realized that there is only one doctor available to evaluate my condition at the clinic, and that is Dr. Byron Calhoun. This fact caused me to be distraught as Dr. Calhoun is a recognized anti-abortion extremist who inserts his personal views about abortion into his practice of medicine and whose lack of respect for the truth is documented. Being subjected to his oversight of my care is unthinkable for me as I am an employee of the Women's Health Center of West Virginia, the organization that Dr. Calhoun targeted with a fabricated lawsuit. I am pro-choice and do believe in women's reproductive rights.

If there is not an option for high-risk care from another local physician, I am worried that my medical care will be much different than that of someone who holds the same beliefs as Dr. Calhoun. Being assigned to Dr. Calhoun causes concern that my pregnancy risk will be heightened if I have no alternative to assignment to his care. I do not believe that Dr. Calhoun is capable of providing objective obstetrical care as he is driven by a political agenda.

Women in our community should not have to choose between commutes to Huntington for professional care of high-risk pregnancy or local care from an unprofessional, misogynistic physician. Dr. Calhoun's documented unprofessional behaviors must be addressed by the professional organizations that employ him. Charleston Area Medical Center and West Virginia University should take action to address Dr. Calhoun's behaviors and to reconsider his engagement. The fact that this doctor holds a position of authority in the largest medical center and educational institution in West Virginia raises worrisome ethical questions about the mission of the hospital and of West Virginia University. Women with high-risk pregnancies deserve better.

I am requesting a prompt reply from you identifying my alternatives for pregnancy care in my situation. A commute to Huntington is not an option for me. I never dreamed that my need for access to high-risk maternity care would place me in the care of a physician whose knowledge about the source of my employment causes me to panic.

Thank you,
Jessica Gladwell, BSW, LSW

Dear Dean Marsh-

I write to you to express my frustration and concern regarding Dr. Byron Calhoun, Vice-Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at WVU at Charleston Area Medical Center. I have been following the public spectacle that was the baseless lawsuit filed against the Women's Health Center of Charleston which was spearheaded by Dr. Calhoun. The dismissal of said suit by Judge Tabit was sound, and the entire spectacle encapsulates in my opinion the danger that Dr. Calhoun poses to West Virginia women who seek pregnancy care at CAMC. Calhoun has proven himself to be a zealot, and one that relishes media attention so clearly he sees no conflict with his Hippocratic Oath. To find the health needs of his patients as a secondary concern to his religious beliefs makes him at best an obstacle for women to obtain quality and unbiased health care and at worst an absolute danger to his patient's health and well-being. What harm has come to his patient in the dismissed suit who was subject to his manipulation to further his religious and political objectives?

I had a high-risk pregnancy eight years ago, and I cannot help but think if I had been a patient of Dr. Calhoun's and suffered a complication that warranted a medically necessary termination of the pregnancy, would my best interests be served or would I have merely been regarded as collateral damage to delivering a non-viable fetus at whatever cost? Fortunately for me I delivered a healthy child and my family is intact. That decision to become pregnant came with much worry, anxiety and thoughtful discussion with my spouse. Is it sound judgment by WVU and CAMC to allow his views to add more anxiety to a patient's pregnancy? His unprofessional and reckless behavior forces one to wonder how many West Virginia families have been given medical advice based on his strident, anti-choice views? How many women have been harmed or will be harmed in the future by his inability to practice modern medicine devoid of religious zealotry?

It is my understanding that Calhoun is the only maternal fetal medicine specialist in Kanawha County, which makes him the only option for some women who need specialized care or care in an emergency situation. Would Calhoun make a professional, sound call in the ER for a pregnant patient whose life may be on the line? The fact that the question has to be posed at all gives us the answer.

I personally know of several women who are concerned enough about him that they have left the area for pregnancy care, or are planning to do so should they become pregnant to avoid the chance that they will have to be seen by him as a patient. But what about women without the resources to leave the area to seek care elsewhere? CAMC and WVU have amazing reputations and are known for striving to provide high quality care to West Virginians. I was encouraged by the Charleston Gazette interview in which you and President Gee discuss how you want to be a part of the solution to move West Virginia forward by continuing that work.

Surely you must see that having someone like Byron Calhoun associated with your fine institution is not in keeping with this goal and your commitment to improving and protecting the health of our citizens. I hope that you will seriously consider severing your relationship with Dr. Calhoun. There is no question that he is dangerous to women's health. As you stated in your interview, you would like for West Virginians to better appreciate their worth. I agree with that statement completely. West Virginia women and families are worth more, and deserve better.

Sincerely,

Lesly Messina

Mr. Weber and Dr. Linton,

I am writing to you today to express growing concern that I have regarding Dr. Byron Calhoun's ongoing presence as the sole fetal-maternal specialist at CAMC/WVU-Charleston Division. I have kept up to date with the controversial issues surrounding his personal political and religious beliefs and how they impact his practice. This has mainly been through the media and most recently by the open letter from Margaret Chapman Pomponio that was written to Dean Marsh at WVU, and published in the Gazette two weeks ago. I do know Margaret but did not know her personal story until I read her letter in the paper.

I was absolutely shocked and appalled to learn that Dr. Calhoun had manipulated and essentially lied to a local patient, all in order to file a lawsuit against Women's Health Center after she had had an abortion there. My intention in writing this letter is not to open a discussion of the politics of abortion, but rather act in my duty as a woman and as a healthcare provider myself to express disdain. How can CAMC/WVU afford to retain a physician that refuses to provide unbiased comprehensive care, manipulates and/or attacks others for personal or political gain, and most importantly in my opinion, be dishonest in dealing with patients and the community at large?

As a CAMC employee and director of our local Ryan White HIV program here, I think it should be our overarching goal to afford ALL of our local residents access to high quality, unbiased, comprehensive care. I know from personal experience working with my clients how difficult it can be to travel long distances and how often they experience stigma and are afraid of discrimination from providers. Margaret said that through her role as a women's reproductive advocate that she had heard numerous stories of providers here in Charleston at both CAMC and Thomas referring patients to Marshall University for fear of receiving biased care at CAMC. Do we really want to have that kind of reputation? I don't think we do.

I hope that after having heard from Margaret, myself and probably other concerned individuals you will give serious thought and attention to Dr. Calhoun's ongoing antics. Is this the kind of behavior we want, exhibited by one of the most vital and respected physician positions at our institution? Let's remember the mission: Striving to provide the best health care to every patient, every day.

Respectfully,

Christine Teague

Dean Clay Marsh, MD
West Virginia University Health Sciences
Vice President & Executive Dean for Health Sciences
PO Box 9000; 1 Medical Center Drive
Morgantown, WV 26506

May 15, 2015

Dean Clay Marsh:

I am spurred to write to you after reading the article in the Charleston Gazette yesterday, "WVU Health Sciences Dean Marsh Talks Health Care, Research Future." Let me begin by saying I was particularly heartened by your comments about Dr. Byron Calhoun. Your willingness to address the issues raised by Dr. Calhoun's conduct inspires confidence that West Virginia University is committed to take action on the very serious crisis facing your institution and those in need of reproductive health care in the Kanawha County Valley. I write to provide you with information about Dr. Calhoun's unwillingness to provide comprehensive reproductive health care, his attacks on health care providers, and his mistreatment of patients for his personal political and religious purposes. I also wish to provide you with a patient's perspective of the impact of Calhoun's inappropriate behavior.

As you know, Calhoun was the central figure in a politically-motivated lawsuit against Women's Health Center. It is undisputed that Calhoun contacted his patient, Itai Gravely, one year after seeing her and advised her for the first time that he believed her abortion had been botched and that a fetal skull was left in her uterus. There is no medical evidence to corroborate Dr. Calhoun's claim, which the Circuit Court of Kanawha County found to be particularly dubious given that Calhoun simultaneously referred Gravely to a lawyer for the political organization, the West Virginia Family Policy Council. Calhoun went on to serve as an expert in the case, which was ultimately summarily dismissed. Calhoun's involvement in the case highlights his obvious religious objections to comprehensive reproductive health care. He not only refuses to provide comprehensive care himself, but actively attacks other providers who do. However, it is most troubling that he was willing to manipulate his own patient into filing the frivolous suit. He made a patient a political pawn.

What Calhoun did to Itai Gravely was unthinkable. I fear there are other patients who have suffered as Gravely has, and worse, I predict there will be more if he remains in his position. Calhoun is on a crusade. He is ruthless and has demonstrated he will lie, connive and manipulate to serve what he believes is a higher calling.

To afford a patient's perspective, I offer my own story for your consideration. I have been a happy, satisfied patient at WVU Physicians of Charleston for many years. I was fortunate to have been treated by Dr. Todd DePond when I needed specialized gynecological care. I found Dr. DePond to be a skilled surgeon and a compassionate, talented caregiver.

My husband and I counted ourselves fortunate again to have been able to turn to WVU Physicians of Charleston when we sought fertility treatment to help us conceive. Due to the excellent care provided by Dr. Pickens Gantt and his team, we are happily expecting twins over the summer. I cannot say enough good things about WVU Physicians of Charleston and their devotion to providing excellent women's health care. So it was an easy decision to pursue a referral to Dr. David Thomas at CAMC Women and Children's for my obstetrical care.

While my pregnancy is normal and healthy, as an expectant mother of twins, I need a doctor who specializes in high risk pregnancies in the unlikely event there are complications. Unfortunately, I learned that Dr. Calhoun is the only maternal-fetal medicine specialist at WVU/CAMC. Accordingly, I could not see Dr. Thomas, the provider of my choice, without the possibility of being treated by Dr. Calhoun. After discussion with my husband, we decided that I cannot take the chance that I might need specialized care by this man, as it is abundantly clear that he is unable to provide unbiased treatment or consultation. It is disturbing to me that because he is the only specialist at WVU/CAMC, anyone could end up as his patient. Dr. Calhoun prevented me from receiving care in my home town. Needless to say, not being able to receive health care in our own town is extremely troubling for me and my family.

Calhoun forced me to seek care outside Charleston. I am fortunate to be receiving excellent care from Marshall University's Division of Obstetrics and Gynecology and, in the unlikely event of complications, Dr. David Chaffin, a respected maternal-fetal medicine specialist, is available for my treatment at Marshall's Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

In my capacity as a women's reproductive health advocate, I have repeatedly learned of stories of health care providers at WVU/CAMC and Thomas Memorial referring patients to Marshall for those who are concerned about the biased, compromised care Calhoun provides. It is apparent that, unfortunately, WVU/CAMC is currently prioritizing Calhoun's ability to pursue his radical religious and political beliefs at the expense of patient care. Calhoun is singlehandedly driving patients away from health care close to their homes, creating anxiety and possibly medical problems due to travel time; families suffer as a result. CAMC/WVU also suffers loss of patients and reputation.

In the spirit of openness, I would like to acknowledge stories about Dr. Calhoun providing good care to women expecting children who will be born with special needs. Surely, women deserve a maternal-fetal medicine specialist who will provide excellent care. But the possibility that Calhoun has provided well-received care to a subsection of patients does not compensate for his unwillingness to provide unbiased care to *all* patients. Patients at

WVU/CAMC deserve a specialist who will do so. His retention is unfair to the other excellent providers at Women and Children's and WVU Physicians of Charleston. It is unfair to patients. His crusade has made him a threat to public health in the Kanawha Valley.

For your further consideration, I have enclosed several documents for your review:

- 1) Testimony provided by Dr. Calhoun to the West Virginia Legislature, making specific note of new standards of care at CAMC/WVU (see pages 81-102)
- 2) Delegate Nancy Guthrie's Letter to the Board of Medicine regarding Dr. Calhoun
- 3) Pat White's Letter to Andrew Weber outlining problems with Dr. Calhoun's claims
- 4) Letter sent by Dr. Calhoun to Priests for Life, using WVU letterhead

I believe you will see a troubling pattern emerges that shows a doctor who is unwilling to work with colleagues yet willing to attack patients and providers. I trust that you will give this situation the serious consideration that it deserves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Chapman Pomponio". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret Chapman Pomponio