



2 July 2021

Dr. Richard Helmers, MD,
Northwest Wisconsin Regional Vice-President
Mayo Health System
1400 Bellinger Street
Eau Claire, WI 54703

Dear Dr. Helmers:

I have been a Mayo (Midelfort) Clinic patient since the mid-1960s. I have received excellent care at the medical facility and at Mayo-Rochester. For the last nearly 30 years, my primary care physician has been Dr. Steven Weiss, Internal Medicine.

I was deeply troubled when I saw you and the board had fired him! I know Mayo leadership was upset that he identified himself as a Mayo physician regarding a couple public writings and a recent book, *Carnage in America*. I understand he was warned, and I understand he was given opportunity to resign in May. Personally, I think he had bad advice by others encouraging him to self-publish his blog in the form of a book.

My concern is that the disciplinary action does not match the Dr. Weiss's exemplary role as an internist. I believe he has had no indiscretions or incompetence issues as a physician. Quite the contrary! He has had a stellar career and has been an asset to Mayo Clinic for 32 years! I know stories of how he has helped countless individuals, many times without anyone but the person/family knowing. As a pastor, many persons have shared with me their thankfulness for his specific care and his caring way. Let me share my personal examples.

I ended up with Dr. Weiss as a physician after my husband Jim Christoffersen, a classic, severe hemophiliac, died of AIDS from multiple Factor VIII infusions that were contaminated with the HIV virus. Before I was his patient, I had to accompany my husband to Rochester for care as Eau Claire physicians refused to care for him. Frantically, I searched for someone who would see my husband locally. A fellow chaplain at Mayo (Midelfort) suggested Dr. Weiss, as he saw AIDS patients. As I sobbed on the phone, he saw no problem in seeing him. My husband died shortly after coming under his care as it was too late to turn things around in the early 1990s, but he tried.

Since I did not have a primary care physician, Dr. Weiss agreed to take me as his patient. After my husband died, I suffered a depression. He managed to get me to express the wish to die and intervened as well as prescribing an antidepressant. I and others owe our lives to his care.

Then there was the time when I wanted to know more about my father Palmer's mental illness. Dad left our family for Mendota Mental Health Institute in Madison when I was age 3. I asked Dr. Weiss if he could get those records which he was able to do for me and my brother Jim to understand our health history. We were both extremely grateful. My brother credited Dr. Weiss with the information in a book he wrote about growing up with a mentally ill father.

And now, I read in a public venue, the *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*, and see on our local television news that my primary care physician has been fired—that he was humiliated by being escorted out of his 32-year workplace by security? This is crazy and over the top for someone who was beloved by his patients (I know many of them) and has been the **best diagnostician** I and many have ever had. We feel a huge loss of someone who works beyond the call of duty to care for so many patients and others.

Over 32 years, Dr. Weiss has brought his expertise and care to reflect favorably upon Mayo (Midelfort)! He has been an advocate for every one of his patients and for those who could not afford care through his leadership with the free clinic in this community.

My question remains: What were you and the Board thinking in bringing such harsh discipline on one who did so much good for this community and for Mayo? **I am appalled.** Perhaps, some other lesser punishment would have fit the situation. Dr. Weiss did not deserve this harsh unanimous decision by the Board. I, for one, am seriously considering if I can tolerate such treatment of one of your outstanding internal medicine physicians. I had to reschedule a July annual appointment to a nurse-practitioner as the wait for another physician was at least five months. We all experience a loss because we were not able to say, "good-bye" to our longtime caregiver who had such a kindness about him. My husband John Moseng is his patient too and is shocked at the abrupt loss also.

I am extremely disappointed in Mayo Clinic, Eau Claire. The only thing that would satisfy me (and others) is having Dr. Weiss reinstated for the sake of his many patients and our relationship with him. Please know, he has not asked me to write this letter. I am doing this because I am upset with the way Mayo treats its employees. It reflects on our care and our health too.

Sincerely,

Sandee D. Kosmo, M.S., M. Div.

Semi-retired pastor, Grace Lutheran Communities; First Presbyterian Church, Chippewa Falls

C: Gianrico Farrugia, MD, President & CEO, Mayo Clinic; Abdulla Akfally, MD, Primary Care & Internal Medicine Chair, Northwest Wisconsin; Dr. Steven Weiss, Internist

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