

Physician Files Multimillion Dollar Lawsuit Against Johns Hopkins

The Baltimore law firm Brown, Goldstein & Levy (www.browngold.com) today announced the filing of a multi-million dollar lawsuit against Johns Hopkins University and Hospital on behalf of Oscar K. Serrano, M.D., a 30-year-old physician who was in the third year of an eight-year joint General Surgery residency/Ph.D. program at Hopkins when he was summarily fired in April. The Complaint, filed today in Baltimore City state court, alleges that Dr. Serrano's firing resulted from the defendants' anger over his complaints about the School's efforts to cover up its failure to comply with state and federal accreditation requirements during an investigation into the General Surgery residency program by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. The Defendants then defamed him by spreading false information about the reason for his firing.

Dr. Serrano, who spoke no English when he immigrated to the United States with his family from Mexico while still in elementary school, graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Arizona and received his medical degree from Stanford University School of Medicine before attending Johns Hopkins. It had been his ambition to specialize in the causes and treatments of pancreatic cancer, which at present is an almost invariably fatal disease. As a result of defendants' actions, however, Dr. Serrano was forced to withdraw from his Ph.D. program as well, the Complaint alleges.

The Complaint alleges that the reasons given by the defendants for firing Dr. Serrano were pretextual and without factual basis. For example, one of the reasons offered in support of the termination was that Dr. Serrano purportedly had "interpersonal difficulties with nurses and colleagues." But a week after he received notice of his termination – but before it was publically known – Dr. Serrano's peers unanimously elected him to the position of President of the House Staff Council, the organization that represents all Hopkins residents. This was a reflection not only of how well-respected Dr. Serrano was by his colleagues, but also of their appreciation for his willingness to speak out about abuses in the Hopkins residency programs.

Named as defendants are Pamela Lipsett, M.D., Director of the General Surgery residency program; Julie Freischlag, M.D., Chief of Surgery at Johns Hopkins; Suzanne Topalian, M.D., a Professor of Surgery at Johns Hopkins; Steven Leach, M.D., Director of the National Institutes of Health-funded T32 research grant at Johns Hopkins; the Johns Hopkins University; and the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

The Complaint contains the following legal claims and claims for damages: Breach of Contract (\$750,000 compensatory); Wrongful Termination (\$750,000 compensatory; \$3,000,000 punitive); Tortious Interference with Business Relations (two counts, \$750,000 compensatory; \$3,000,000 punitive each); Defamation (four counts, \$10,000,000 compensatory; \$10,000,000 punitive each); and Invasion of Privacy (two counts, \$10,000,000 compensatory; \$10,000,000 punitive each). A copy of the Complaint may be downloaded from www.browngold.com.

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