

Just

Daily Mail, Saturday, December 7, 2013

sickening

**'Bullying' boss of cancer scandal hospital
– who's paid £165,000 – has lucrative second
job running management consultancy firm**

By Louise Eccles

THE £165,000-a-year chief executive of a scandal-hit hospital is running a lucrative management consultancy alongside his role leading a struggling trust.

Questions were raised over how Dr Gordon Coutts juggled his demanding role at Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust with his own business.

Last year, he received dividends of £20,000 from Coutts Consulting Ltd, which advises the health industry on how to improve performance and leadership.

His consultancy role has emerged three weeks ago after the Care Quality Commission watchdog published a report which claimed that employees had been 'pressured or bullied' by managers into changing data on patient waiting times for cancer treatment to meet national targets, potentially putting lives at risk.

Essex Police announced last week that they had launched an investigation into the claims about the treatment of staff. If criminal offences are uncovered, staff could face jail.

National guidelines say patients must wait a maximum of two months for their initial cancer treatment from the time they are referred to hospital by a GP.

But some patients waited up to four months for cancer treatment at Colchester General Hospital, which is now in special measures.

Dr Coutts has been accused of bullying by staff, including his personal assistant Mandy Tapfield who

'IT'S POLICY TO FALSIFY RECORDS'

MANAGERS reportedly sent emails to staff at Colchester General Hospital saying it was 'now policy' to falsify cancer waiting times on patients' records.

The astonishing claim was made by public services union Unison.

Tim Roberts, regional organiser for Unison, said: 'We know that a number of staff questioned the falsification of data by senior managers, at the top of cancer services, and they were informed that it was "now policy" for the

data to be recorded in that way. We have seen the emails to prove this. Others were told verbally.

'It is shocking that the level of malpractice among some of the managers was so institutionalised that managers were prepared to issue their instructions to staff, about this, in writing.'

It is understood this response by managers was prompted by queries from staff about discrepancies between patients' notes and the official database.

quit last month, and of presiding over a culture which was obsessed with government targets.

Colchester MP Sir Bob Russell, said: 'I was not aware of Dr Coutts' second role. The question now is did that impact on his paid job. That's a matter the [trust] board now needs to comment on.'

Dr Mark Aitken, a retired consultant in endocrinology and diabetes at the hospital, said: 'I think there

could be a real conflict of interest here. It also shows a lack of commitment to the NHS.

'Being chief executive is a very demanding role and his whole focus should be on that. He earns enough money for it.'

Dr Coutts founded his company in June 2010 only two months after he became a non-executive director Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust. That July



Questions: Dr Gordon Coutts

he was catapulted into the role of trust chief executive.

He has made several presentations to the pharmaceutical industry through Coutts Consulting, including one at Wellards' annual conference when he spoke about 'inspiring our employees'. Wellards provides sales training for staff in the pharmaceutical industry.

Dr Coutts, 52, whose foundation trust is semi-autonomous from the Government, also lectured on 'lib-

'Limited amount of work'

erating the NHS' during a presentation entitled, New NHS, New Customers, New Approach - Foundation Trust Perspective.

It is unclear if he draws a salary from Coutts Consulting because only abbreviated accounts have been filed to Companies House.

Dr Coutts worked as a doctor for four years, before moving into the pharmaceutical industry, where he made his fortune.

He was a director of several pharmaceutical giants in the US, Japan and Belgium. When he returned to

Britain in 2004, he bought a £2.5million Suffolk farmhouse outright.

He lives with his wife Ann Marie Swart, a professor of medicine and epidemiology at the University of East Anglia, and his two children.

The Care Quality Commission report said the records of 22 patients had been changed to cover up the fact they had faced 'extensive' delays for treatment - which could have put their lives at risk.

Alleged victims include four-year-old Mackenzie Cackett, who died from a brain tumour after waiting months for a diagnosis.

A spokesman for the hospital trust said that although Dr Coutts was appointed chief executive in July 2010, he did not start the role until September that year.

'Being chief executive of an acute hospital trust is a full-time plus post, so since taking up that role he has done only an extremely limited amount of work for Coutts Consulting, which, in the main, consists of giving talks,' he said.

'This has all been done in his own time and, he has always declared Coutts Consulting on the [trust] board's register of interests, which is publicly available on the trust's website.'