

REPORT for CIDAC Panel: Dr Dermot Kearney (DK)

CIDAC hearing date	11 June 2025
Years of events	2021-2022
Employment at time of events	General medical physician and cardiologist
Issues	Complaints were made against DK, and he was suspended from specific practices by a medical tribunal, following allegations of potential professional misconduct, namely that he provided unauthorized medication in the form of abortion pill reversal treatment. It was eventually found there was no case to answer and he was exonerated.
Was there a legal outcome?	Yes
Sex	Male
Denomination	Catholic
Use of data	Unrestricted other than couple of names.

Background

In 2014, the Catholic Medical Association (CMA) was approached by a pro-life group who asked if help was available for women who wanted to save their pregnancy. Women were approaching various pro-life organisations, having changed their mind after taking the abortion pill mifepristone, the first of two drugs designed to abort the foetus. At that time, the CMA knew nothing about abortion pill reversal treatment (APRT), though the treatment was already widespread in the US. In 2018, DK was elected the CMA President,¹ and following another approach made to the organisation from a pro-life group pleading for help, he visited the US to meet the APRT pioneers. He says nobody else in the UK addressed this topic. Subsequently, the CMA decided to write to UK medical bodies (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), Royal College of General Practitioners, NHS England) to inform them about APRT, in the hope it would become mainstream as a service to women. Responses were, DK says, disappointing as none were prepared to offer support.

The RCOG objected, he recalls, mainly because they couldn't promote off-licence medications. However, DK explains that off-licensed medications are commonly used for conditions not originally intended for the medication, but which are deemed beneficial for treating other conditions. DK says there are "many" off-licence drugs used by doctors without complaint. This contrasts with unlicensed drugs, whose use is prohibited outright. The CMA highlighted to the RCOG that, at that time, misoprostol, a drug used for management of peptic ulcer disease, was used off-licence as the second drug administered in abortion, but wasn't licensed for abortion, yet the RCOG happily promoted its use. Another case raised by the CMA was methotrexate, an anti-inflammatory drug used in a number of chronic inflammatory conditions but which was being used off-licence for the medical management of ectopic pregnancy and promoted by the RCOG. These arguments garnered no response.

The CMA subsequently wrote to the General Medical Council (GMC) seeking clarification about women who, having taken the first abortion pill, wanted to withdraw consent to complete the abortion process. How should doctors respond, they asked? The GMC answered that while it wasn't within their remit to provide clinical information, DK reports they referred to good medical practice, namely, patients always have the right to know all available options at any stage of treatment, including a right to withdraw consent at any time. Though not having their question addressed entirely, DK explains it was sufficient to "make us feel that we were secure in going ahead with at least providing mothers with this alternative option."

He further explains that his pro-life motivation is informed by both a humanitarian and Christian philosophy. After studying APRT for six years, DK began offering it to women who requested it.

Complaints leading to exoneration

In April 2021, DK (and Dr Reilly [DR], a fellow doctor providing APRT) were contacted by the GMC, stating that serious allegations of potential professional misconduct had been brought against them. The complaint against DK was from MSI Reproductive Choices² and the RCOG President. No woman who had availed themselves of APRT had complained. It was alleged DK was enforcing his pro-life and Christian beliefs onto vulnerable women, that he used an unauthorized medication and didn't follow guidelines on abortion provision. The RCOG also cited that both doctors were Catholic, that he was the CMA President, which DK says, was "an apparently even bigger crime than just being a normal, regular Catholic."

DK notes a letter written by the RCOG's legal adviser, whom DK believes had implied that as the CMA President, this fact rendered him an unsuitable person to provide non-judgmental, accurate, truthful information to women, and that he could be guilty of misconduct.

An investigation followed into DK and DR. In May 2021, a meeting was held by the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (MPTS). DK was defended by the Christian Legal Centre. DK says that he and DR were both "found guilty or at least deemed that the allegations were serious enough, that we should be suspended." The GMC, he reports, successfully sought the maximum penalty, an 18-month suspension period, though the tribunal viewed this as disproportionate and harsh. The MPTS ruled that DK could continue to practice as a general medical physician and cardiologist but was prohibited from administering, prescribing or recommending progesterone in relation to abortion. He was also prohibited from any private medicine or charitable work with charitable medical groups without prior written permission from the GMC. A review would be done every six months.

With help from DK's lawyers, an expert witness investigated the allegations. He concluded they didn't represent professional misconduct. Statements from ten women who received APRT, including those who chose not to receive it, were also included as part of the evidence presented to the MPTS. Apparently, with this new evidence now available, the review would be brought forward to three months. Previously, no evidence had been considered by the MPTS, DK says, but only the allegations. DK reports that during an online hearing in August 2021, the MPTS President said that no evidence would be considered, but that consideration would be given to "see if the allegations are still significant enough," and if the conditions imposed were still applicable. It was determined that they were.

In September, DK's lawyers decided to make an application to the High Court, stating that the conditions that had been imposed upon DK were unjust, unnecessary and disproportionate. A hearing was scheduled for February 2022. DK recalls the GMC saying they were struggling to find an expert witness to investigate the allegations. Eventually they found one, and a report was produced at the end of January. It was, DK says, "very supportive, almost identical to the report from our expert witness." The GMC stated there was "no possibility of finding any evidence to support the allegations," DK reports. Six days before the scheduled High Court hearing, DK was told by the GMC that the case against him was being dropped. The GMC still had to refer the case back to the MPTS, who had imposed the original restrictions. The case investigators and expert witnesses accepted, DK says, that it was false to claim there's no scientific evidence or safety record to support APRT. In March 2022, the MPTS formally declared the conditions against DK no longer applied.³ No apology to DK was ever given.

Most of the specific allegations, DK explains, against him and DR, related to their pro-life beliefs and pro-life activities. DK stresses that in a letter from the RCOG, concern was expressed, not so much about the treatment they offered, but the fact that he and DR were Catholic. DK was disappointed that this concern was endorsed by the GMC and used in their evidence against both doctors at the tribunal.

APRT services

Following his exoneration, DK resumed his services to women who requested APRT. To date, DK reports that seventy-five babies have been saved in the UK because of APRT, 33 of which DK has been associated with. More widely, DK cites that 7000 babies have been saved, most of these in the US. DK stresses that the

women seeking to preserve their pregnancy come to him, as opposed to him seeking them. He doesn't tell them he is Catholic.

Further medical issues

APRT can only be used, if misoprostol, the second of the two abortion pills, hasn't been ingested. APRT involves the use of progesterone, a hormone already used for decades to prevent miscarriage in women who either have low levels of, or dysfunctional, progesterone. One objection used by APRT opponents is that no randomised control trials (RCTs) have been applied, but DK says this would be unethical and cruel, because a woman seeking to preserve her pregnancy would be told that the tablet she is given may or may not be the right one. DK cites the fact that when progesterone is used in IVF treatment, it is similarly unsupported by RCTs, yet the practice attracts no opposition. Progesterone can induce fatigue. Frequently, though not always, it causes nausea. DK routinely offers cyclizine, if this is needed, which itself is routinely used for morning sickness in early pregnancy. For a small number of women, other side effects include headaches, dizziness and sleepiness.

When providing APRT, DK does extra monitoring and will, if agreed by the woman, provide daily follow-up. Bleeding can occur. DK contrasts this with the abortion drug mifepristone, which causes bleeding in almost all cases, a drug now commonly taken by women at home without medical supervision. Annually, of the 235,000 to 240,000 chemical abortions, DK reports that 7% or tens of thousands of women who take both abortion pills will end up attending emergency A and E departments. Women can experience severe pain (cramps) that can't be controlled, DK says, and in rare cases, some get serious infections and have died.

University talks

DK has been invited to talk to pro-life student societies. His talk is typically entitled, "Offering women a second chance – abortion pill reversal in the UK." In March 2025, DK was invited to speak at the pro-life society at Manchester University. As DK arrived to enter the building, he says about 70-100 protesters were chanting, shouting hateful words against him personally and expletives, e.g. "f*** the church". Some wore masks and balaclavas and held banners with slogans. They blocked the entrance to the meeting room, he says. DK recalls two police officers in attendance, and was told two other plain clothed officers were also present. After about a 90-minute stand-off, DK was informed the meeting had to be cancelled. An alternative, off-campus venue was found for the event. As DK began walking away from the university, two protesters began following him. As this was considered harassment, they were removed by a security officer.

Previously, his talk at Oxford University attracted no opposition. Another at Birmingham University was met with a letter of protest, signed by university groups, opposing his right to speak on campus. It was initially cancelled, DK was informed, due to a threat that there might be serious protests. The event ultimately was reinstated but only open to those with tickets. Protests took place outside the building, but without any danger.

¹ His term of office expired by 2021.

² Formerly Marie Stopes International.

³ DR, who had faced similar allegations to DK, had similar conditions imposed by the GMC, but hadn't taken her case to the High Court, and had her case dropped about two months after DK.