

Doctor lashes out at police after being cleared of sex assaults on patients

Dr Jeremy Coleman claims police failed to understand the purpose of routine clinical procedures



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A doctor found not guilty of dozens of indecent and sexual assault charges has hit out at the police involved in the case, claiming they failed to understand the purpose of routine clinical procedures.

Lawyers representing Dr Jeremy Michael Stafford Coleman say the medical profession should be “gravely concerned” about the case as it could happen to any doctor.

“Dr Coleman is an innocent man, who cannot turn back the clock and immediately return to the position he was in two years ago, when he was a highly respected medical practitioner with a thriving practice,” said John Laxon, from Laxon Lex Lawyers.

“The trial has taken a huge toll on him and his family.

“Yet Dr Coleman’s biggest concern is that what happened to him could happen to any doctor doing his or her job thoroughly and for a proper purpose.”

Dr Coleman, 64, was charged in 2015 with 66 sexual and indecent assault offences relating to more than 40 patients, and as a result was suspended from practice by the Medical Council of NSW in 2016.

The District Court in Newcastle heard the allegations made against the general physician and immunologist, who had clinics in Newcastle and Kanwal on the NSW Central Coast, occurred over a 20-year period between 1986 to 2013.

After a marathon 11-month trial that began in September 2017, Dr Coleman was found not guilty of 50 charges on Monday.

The jury, which had deliberated for 36 days, remained deadlocked on the remaining 16 counts.

However, satisfied with the evidence taken from the jurors, Judge Penny Hock said it was unlikely the jury would ever be able to come to a unanimous or majority verdict on the remaining counts and ended the trial.

During the trial, the defence argued that all of Dr Coleman’s examinations, which included internal examinations of female patients, were performed for a medical purpose and not a sexual one.

One patient, who had anaphylaxis, told the court Dr Coleman performed an internal examination on her twice in 1993.

However, Dr Coleman’s barrister said her client had no memory and no clinical notes about that patient.

Hours after Monday’s verdict, the lawyers welcomed the outcome, but condemned the actions of the police.

“The police failed to understand the nature of Dr Coleman’s medical training, experience and practice, or the concept of proper medical purpose,” their statement said.

“Dr Coleman never conducted any examination of a patient other than for a proper medical purpose.

“He undertook routine clinical procedures that are conducted by the country’s doctors every day.”

The lawyers for Dr Coleman also reproached the police for utilising radio and social media platforms to call for “victims” to come forward during their investigation.

“Of course, measures are required to ensure the voices of those who believe they have been sexually assaulted are heard,” Mr Laxon said.

“However, these measures should not create an environment where untested allegations are encouraged to snowball, in the process destroying the lives and reputations of an accused person, long before the trial ever begins, as occurred in this case.”