



## News and Current Events :: Doctors: 'Let us pray for patients'

### Doctors: 'Let us pray for patients', on: 2009/6/28 2:48

"Doctors are to demand the right to discuss religion with their patients and to pray for them, it has been reported.

The issue will be discussed at the British Medical Association (BMA) annual representative meeting which begins on Monday.

Cancer specialist Dr Bernadette Birtwhistle, of the Christian Medical Fellowship, said: "I think it is getting to the point where many of us feel we cannot talk to patients about their spiritual or religious needs or ask them about praying."

She told the BBC news: "Christianity is being seen as something that is unhelpful. Freedom of speech is being curtailed too much and I don't think that is always in the benefit of patients."

Earlier this year it emerged that nurse Caroline Petrie was suspended by North Somerset NHS Trust after offering to pray for a patient, although she was later allowed to return to work.

Campaigners have complained that more staff may find themselves in trouble if their religious beliefs come into conflict with the guidelines set out in a document called Religion or Belief: A Practical Guide for the NHS.

The document states: "Members of some religions ... are expected to preach and to try to convert other people. In a workplace environment this can cause many problems, as non-religious people and those from other religions or beliefs could feel harassed and intimidated by this behaviour.

"To avoid misunderstandings and complaints on this issue, it should be made clear to everyone from the first day of training and/or employment, and regularly restated, that such behaviour, notwithstanding religious beliefs, could be construed as harassment under the disciplinary and grievance procedures."

A Department of Health spokesman said the document was a guide to encourage awareness for staff and patients."

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/21/20090628/tuk-doctors-let-us-pray-for-patients-6323e80.html>