

NEWS

Edgerton Doctor sentenced to 54 months for \$13 million scheme to defraud Medicare

Submitted by
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western Dist. of Wisconsin

Timothy M. O'Shea, Acting United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Dr. Ravi Murali, 39, formerly of Edgerton, Wisconsin, was sentenced today by Chief U.S. District Judge James D. Peterson to 54 months in federal prison for Dr. Murali's

role in a scheme to defraud Medicare. Dr. Murali pleaded guilty to this charge on March 31, 2021.

Dr. Murali wrote thousands of fraudulent orders for Durable Medical Equipment (DME). Other participants in the scheme used Dr. Murali's fraudulent orders to bill Medicare \$26,000,000 of which Medicare paid \$13,000,000.

At sentencing, Chief Judge

Peterson emphasized that a severe sentence was necessary to deter other providers who were considering whether to defraud Medicare and other federal programs. Further, Chief Judge Peterson noted that Dr. Murali's history of dishonesty—he was previously disciplined by the Wisconsin Medical Examining Board for creating a fraudulent diploma to falsely claim that he completed residency—cut

in favor of a longer sentence.

The charge against Dr. Murali was the result of an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Zachary J. Corey handled the prosecution

Edgerton Hospital CEO has issued this statement to The Reporter regarding this

case:

"Edgerton Hospital and Health Services would like the community to know that Dr. Ravi Murali has never worked at our hospital nor has he been credentialed to provide care at or in association with Edgerton Hospital and Health Services. We assure you that the health, safety, and overall well-being of our patients is always our top priority." — Marc Augsburg, CEO



Ravi Murali

CRT

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from history of people perceived as White people when, in fact, they had partial, sometimes substantial, genes demonstrating descent from Africa. Conversely, there are many in the U.S. perceived as Black even though they may appear White, their genetic constitution indicating European or other blood lines.

"I'm 20% White," Watson said, "and about 45% American Indian. That's 65% non-Black, but yet you all see me as black, just like everyone my whole life has seen me as black. In fact, I even see myself as Black!"

Such self-effacing honesty had everyone chuckling, breaking the ice.

"But genetic studies show that I have a greater likelihood for sharing more genetic similarities with many of you in this room, who are mostly White, than I have with most Blacks.

"Race is a social construct; it's not an actual thing," Watson asserted. "And it's often based on observable differences between one social group and another, such as skin color in the United States, especially African-Americans.

"But although it's not biologically based, it still has an effect." Boynton said, "That's where the 'critical' aspect comes in, to see the effects of racial bias. Even though the bias is not fact-based, it is institutionalized in our policies and practices. It has effects in people's lives.

"Over four centuries ago, beginning with the French Philosopher Rene Descartes, critical thinking became a disciplined way to rationally look at the world and see it the way it really is. We divide the history of Western Philosophy by the Pre-critical and Post-critical ages, with the Critical Age of Rationalism dividing them.

"And regarding the word 'theory,' it comes from the Greek 'theoria,' which means to see, like with a lens."

Boynton, a professor of philosophy and religious studies for 20 years, and Watson, a political and health sciences professor who counsels students on the dynamics of institutional change, emphasized that a lens, a good theory, "helps reveal something about the

phenomenon you're studying."

For it was initially used as a lens to look at the structure of racial inequality in the legal and criminal justice system. One example concerned disparity in federal sentencing guidelines for 'crack' versus 'powder cocaine.' Straw polling the audience determined that urban Blacks were the primary users of crack, while suburban Whites preferred powdery cocaine.

Watson stated, "Crack cocaine is baby powder and water with just a little powder cocaine mixed in. Yet, it's seen as much more potent and, therefore dangerous. Why is that? CRT helps us look at how it was institutionalized in the courts through federal guidelines structured in a 100 to 1 ratio of crack being considered more lethal than cocaine.

"So, when a White man was arrested for a bag of powder, he might get probation in a state court, compared to a small amount of crack getting a Black man five or 10 years in federal prison, even though the White man had in his possession a potentially more dangerous amount of the substance!

"Everybody perceives crack as a Black person's drug. A CRT analysis of why the disparity exists in the justice system reveals the bias against blacks.

"Under Obama, that crack-cocaine disparity ratio was reduced 18 to 1. Nevertheless, CRT still shows that higher education and higher family income are negatively associated with crack use, although these factors are often risk factors for powder cocaine use. In other words, if you have more money, you tended not to use crack but might choose to use cocaine.

"Further, data shows that crack users are at higher risk of



Provost Eric Boynton and Professor Ron Watson of Beloit College at the Edgerton Public Library on Nov. 11

arrest and tend to be of lower socioeconomic status compared to powder cocaine users; in other words, they're more often Blacks."

Similar disparities in housing, financing, and schooling were also brought to light, revealing that though the law might have been recodified in places, it's application is still differentially applied. CRT can be a tool to recognize that inequitable application.

The speakers said such a lingering institutional policy or detrimental practice is due to "path dependency."

Boynton said, "Institutionalized path dependency continues until a critical juncture is reached requiring transformation."

"And today," Watson took up

indicating that what's often called 'systemic inequality' is a problem larger than the individual citizen.

Garza wrote, "I learned that racism, like most systems of oppression, isn't about bad people doing terrible things to people who are different from them but instead is a way of maintaining power for certain groups at the expense of others."

Watson and Boynton illustrated the expensive and detrimental history of racism across a large swath of American society, many times making reference to racial discriminatory patterns prevalent in other countries around the globe. American-style inequities included: in Virginia at one time defining a Black person by the "One Drop [of Black blood] Rule," thereby restricting certain rights; Sundown Laws that were largely unspoken rules forbidding Blacks to walk many small town streets after sunset; Housing Covenants, some lasting up until the 1950s, stipulating a landowner couldn't sell to non-Whites; Jim Crow laws; and more.

Besides their academic anchoring, both speakers are actively engaged in applying Critical Race Theory to unearth patterns of discrimination in our society, teach the methodology to others and foster a spirit of

scientific inquiry to help solve inequities where they linger.

It seemed timely that participant Jim Raymond brought up his trip Australia, where one-third of its citizens are immigrants. "In Melbourne there is such a mix of people from all over the world — the U.S., Europe, other parts of Australia, people from India and Southeast Asia, China, everywhere! — and they all get along. It's amazing!"

Raymond's positive testimony gave concrete hope to those still struggling with the adverse heritage of racial inequality, showing that once a change in attitude and institutions is made, certain material and collective advantages accrue.

As Raymond concluded, "Melbourne as a city is so well kept and beautiful. Sidewalks, storefronts, parks, all of it. Beautiful! And everyone is very friendly and gets along with everyone else.

"It was, frankly, very refreshing."

Those who attended also seemed refreshed, where the hour and a half allotted for the cordial conversation ran away too quickly and afterwards people couldn't but help congregate in small groups to continue their critiques of the ideas presented.




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