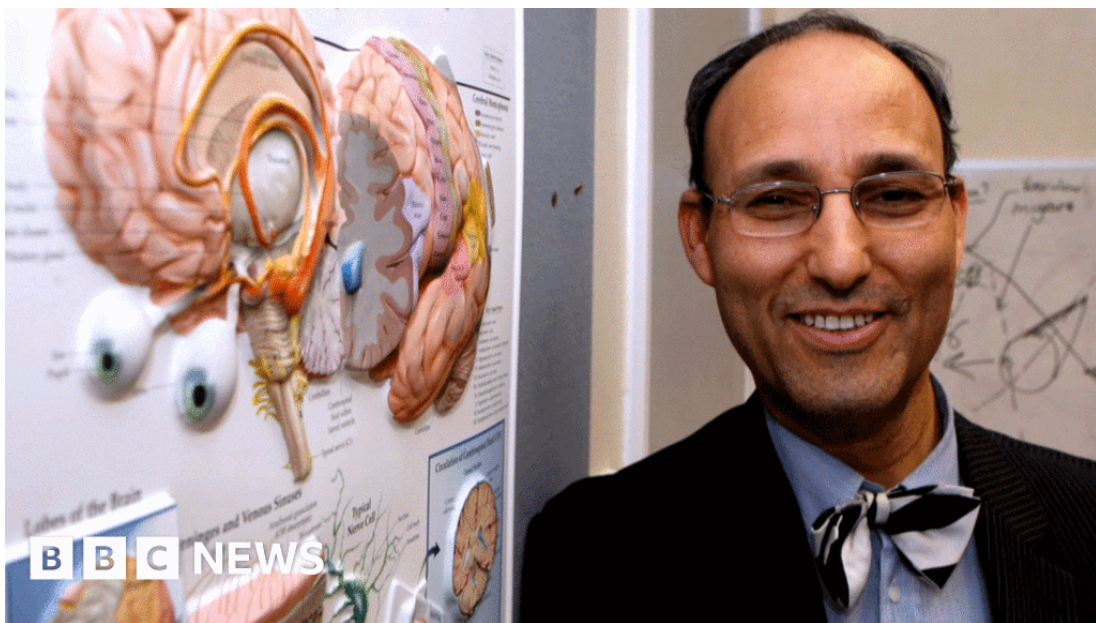


Judge to head inquiry into brain surgeon Eljamel

By Lucy Adams :: 29/02/2024



By Lucy Adams

BBC Scotland social affairs correspondent

Judge Lord Weir has been chosen to head the public inquiry into disgraced brain surgeon Sam Eljamel and the health board that employed him.

Eljamel harmed dozens of patients at NHS Tayside and left some with life-changing injuries.

He was head of neurosurgery at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee until December 2013, when he was suspended.

Health secretary Neil Gray said he regretted how long former patients of Eljamel had to wait for answers.

The public inquiry was confirmed a week after a due diligence review into NHS Tayside [found that concerns about Eljamel were not acted upon](#) with the urgency they deserved.

Lord Weir was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Courts in April 2020, having sat as a temporary High Court judge from 2017.

Prof Stephen Wigmore, regius chair of clinical surgery at the University of Edinburgh, will head the independent clinical review into patients' cases.

The Scottish government announced a public inquiry last year after a long-running campaign from more than 150 former patients of the surgeon.

BBC Scotland's Disclosure programme discovered in 2018 that dozens of people [claimed to have been harmed by the surgeon](#).

And in 2022 the BBC revealed details of a [damning report](#) that found NHS Tayside repeatedly let patients down.

Managers were strongly criticised for putting the doctor under indirect supervision in June 2013, rather than suspending him.

It meant he was allowed to continue operating until he was suspended in December that year.



Image source

Protesters gathered outside the Scottish parliament six times to call for a public inquiry

Neil Gray announced Lord Weir's appointment to the Scottish parliament.

He said lessons were being learned to ensure patient safety is improved.

The health secretary reassured patients that they would be involved in shaping the inquiry.

He said: "The experiences shared with me from these brave individuals are truly shocking and I would like to put on record my regret that their search for answers has taken so long.

"They also have my heartfelt respect for their determination to get to the truth of what has happened."

'Long overdue'

Jules Rose, a former patient of Eljamel who has become a leading campaigner for the inquiry, welcomed the "long overdue" announcement.

But she said: "It does not detract from the arduous journey the patients have had to endure to get to this point".

She said it was frustrating that campaigners had to protest six times outside Holyrood for their voices to be heard.

Ms Rose claimed there were now 173 Eljamel patients campaigning for answers.

"I liken it to the Post Office case," she said.

"If the patients' had not kept campaigning and the BBC had not done the documentary back in 2018, and we didn't have brilliantly supportive MSPs like Liz Smith, we would not have made this progress."

Following the BBC documentary in 2018, Police Scotland began a criminal investigation into Eljamel.

Ms Rose added: "We remain hopeful that Police Scotland will reconsider the extradition of Eljamel from Libya and really hope this inquiry will shine a light not just on Tayside but on the failures of the health system as a whole in Scotland."

Police Scotland said their investigation was ongoing.