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Radiologist to collect \$4.6M jury verdict in whistleblower case against former practice

[Marty Stempniak](#) | January 24, 2024 |
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A Minnesota radiology practice has been ordered to pay a \$4.6 million jury verdict to a whistleblower former physician, plaintiff attorneys announced Tuesday.

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The “landmark” trial dates to June 14, 2022, when Brent Bullis, MD, filed suit against Eden Prairie-based Consulting Radiologists Ltd., claiming he was wrongfully terminated. A senior shareholder and 18-year employee at the time, the radiologist had reportedly brought forth allegations of “unsafe and unethical” practices within the company.

However, Consulting Radiologists terminated Bullis “without cause” in September 2021, according to [court documents](#). His attorneys filed the complaint less than a year later, with jurors on Jan. 19 awarding \$4,587,602 in damages for past and future wage loss and emotional distress.

“This jury understood the serious nature of defendant CRL’s conduct and held it accountable in a big way,” Pamela Johnson, one of Minneapolis-based Halunen Law’s senior trial attorneys representing the plaintiff, said in a Jan. 23 [announcement](#). “This is one of the largest whistleblower verdicts ever in Minnesota. It should be a warning to all Minnesota employers that if you retaliate against employees who stand up to expose safety concerns, you will be held accountable.”

Consulting Radiologists Ltd. did not immediately respond to *Radiology Business* requests for comment Wednesday.

Bullis—now with the Mayo Clinic Health System—spent most of his time at CRL working for Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, which is part of the larger Allina Health. He held several leadership positions at the hospital, including chair of its Department of Radiology, member of its Patient Safety and Quality Committee, and later leading that body in 2020 and 2021.

João Cavalcante, MD, spoke at RSNA 2023 about key topics and tried to get more radiologists interested in cardiac imaging.

In January 2020, Bullis ascended to chief-of-staff-elect at Abbott Northwestern. The appointment obligated him to become “more vocal about the unlawful conduct and legal, medical and ethical violations” he allegedly had witnessed by some CRL colleagues and leadership. This conduct allegedly intensified in the summer of 2021 ahead of Bullis taking on the chief-of-staff role. He allegedly witnessed “peer review transgressions,” with physicians purportedly wrongfully downgrading cases that had been classified as “serious” misses. CRL reportedly terminated Bullis ahead of a 2021 board meeting to discuss the matter.

You can read Consulting Radiologists’ line-by-line response to the original complaint [here](#). The practice denied these allegations, noting that it exercised “reasonable care to prevent, avoid and/or correct any harmful, wrongful, or unlawful conduct toward [Bullis], the existence of which is expressly denied.”

“If plaintiff sustained any damages as alleged in the complaint, such damages were caused by or contributed to by acts, omissions, fault, assumption of risk or other wrongful or improper conduct,” the response states.

The decision followed a two-week trial and deliberation, resulting in the jury deeming that CRL violated the [Minnesota Whistleblower Act](#). Allina Health System also was named as a defendant in the original complaint, but the court later dismissed it. The practice is expected to appeal the decision but hadn't done so as of late Wednesday.



[Marty Stempniak](#)

Marty Stempniak has covered healthcare since 2012, with his byline appearing in the American Hospital Association's member magazine, Modern Healthcare and McKnight's. Prior to that, he wrote about village government and local business for his hometown newspaper in Oak Park, Illinois. He won a Peter Lisagor and Gold EXCEL awards in 2017 for his coverage of the opioid epidemic.



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