

Australian medical authorities order Zero-COVID activist Dr David Berger to undertake “education” program or be deregistered

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In an outrageous attack on “freedom of speech” and democratic rights, Dr David Berger, a highly experienced remote area general practitioner, was ordered by the Medical Board of Australia on June 7 to undertake a disciplining “education program.” If he failed to do so he would be deregistered.

The *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) contacted Berger but he was not prepared to make any comment because he was under Australia Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) conditions.

A well-known and dedicated fighter for a scientific approach to COVID-19, Berger has written thousands of comments on Twitter refuting pandemic misinformation and issuing timely warnings about what must be done to combat the deadly disease. In April, he gave a powerful video interview with the WSWS detailing the consequences of the unscientific government responses to the coronavirus and voicing his support for the Global Workers’ Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Medical Board of Australia directive, which is published on the AHPRA website, is based on anonymous claims that Berger violated the Medical Board of Australia’s “code of conduct” on social media and behaved “unprofessionally” towards colleagues.

Berger has been falsely accused by internet trolls, right-wing commentators and others of undermining public health messaging about COVID-19 on social media because he has exposed government lies and corporate media falsehoods about COVID-19. It is believed that AHPRA has recently issued similar disciplinary measures against other medical practitioners.

The compulsory “program of education” must be approved by the Medical Board of Australia and AHPRA, paid for by Berger, and completed within six months. It is to be accompanied by reports to AHPRA by senior medical officials where he has worked during this period.

The ominous disciplinary process requires Berger to produce a “*reflective practice report* [emphasis added], in relation to behaving professionally and courteously to colleagues and other practitioners, including when using social media, in accordance with Good medical practice: a code of conduct for doctors in Australia.”

The “report” must show that “the Practitioner [Berger] has reflected on the issues that gave rise to this condition [of not behaving professionally and courteously to colleagues and other practitioners]... and how the Practitioner has incorporated the lessons learnt in the education into the Practitioner’s practice.”

The allegations against Berger are flat out lies and have nothing to do with “unprofessional” or “discourteous” behaviour. Their purpose is to intimidate or gag Berger and other registered medical practitioners and stop them speaking out about those responsible for the health catastrophe engulfing the country, and the profit-driven motivations that have produced this disaster.

The timing of AHPRA’s repressive actions against Berger is no accident. The measures were activated as coronavirus infections and deaths in Australia climbed to record levels.

The country’s per capita infection rate is currently among the highest in the world at over 30,000 cases per day, taking the total death toll to just over 10,000 deaths, three-quarters of them this year. Hospital and

ambulance services are at total breaking point.

What is crystal clear to doctors and medical scientists, health workers and broad layers of the population is that the health catastrophe ripping through Australia is a direct result of the “let it rip” policies adopted in December and the systematic and ongoing removal of basic COVID-19 safety procedures.

The new Albanese Labor government and all the state and territory governments who have made clear there will be no lockdowns, are dismantling the remaining rudimentary public health measures to stop the spread of the virus. Overseas travellers arriving in Australia will no longer need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and mask-wearing mandates in airport terminals were scrapped last month across Australia.

The Medical Board of Australia and AHPRA has said nothing about these murderous decisions, which will dramatically increase infection and death rates.

It is not possible in this article to detail all of Berger’s scientifically based refutations of false claims by governments, senior health officials and right-wing media commentators.

Among some of the claims by government and senior health authority were that “children did not get COVID-19,” the virus is “not airborne,” “schools are safe,” “vaccine only policies” would stop the coronavirus, the highly contagious Omicron was “mild,” and that the pandemic would become “endemic.”

All of these were refuted and warned about by Berger, other principled epidemiologists, and by the WWS.

Along with his social media comments and broadcast media interviews, Berger has written extensively on the pandemic, and how to fight it. His articles published in the *Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Guardian*, *BMJ* (formerly, *British Medical Journal*) and the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

The question must be asked: Who has been right about how to fight COVID-19—Berger, or those who seek to silence him? Berger’s warnings have been tragically vindicated.

The response and modus operandi of the Medical Board of Australia and AHPRA is to cover up this reality, ‘shoot the messenger,’ and attempt to intimidate others planning to speak out.

Parallels can be made with the ongoing imprisonment

of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange in Britain’s Belmarsh Prison. Assange is treated like a criminal and persecuted for exposing US war crimes while those who perpetrated them roam scot-free. According to AHPRA, doctors who speak out about the government failure to protect citizens from the pandemic must keep their mouths shut while those responsible for this historic social crime against humanity remain free to continue their work.

Many of Berger’s 33,000 Twitter followers have voiced their anger over the AHPRA’s disciplinary measures, describing them “chilling” and a threat to all doctors and medical practitioners and offering their support.

One wrote: “This is more than a slippery slope. We have entered a Brave New World where doctors recommend actions which harm us because they are in lockstep with the government’s rhetoric. This behaviour by our health care registration board is frightening for our country.”

Others have thanked him, declaring that his advice had protected them and their families from COVID-19 infections. “Can we write to AHPRA to support you.... It is beyond disturbing that freedom of speech is under threat.”

These responses, an important first step, must be taken forward. Doctors, medical practitioners, health workers, teachers and other sections of the working class must publicly condemn AHPRA’s disciplinary action against Dr David Berger and demand that it be immediately withdrawn. This is an essential part of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and the government and big-business corporations that are allowing this highly infectious fatal disease infection to spread.

Send us your statements of support for Dr. Berger and we will publish them in the coming days.



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