MEDIATION OF A PEER REVIEW MATTER

EDGEWATER HOSPITAL is a 200 bed hospital in Wakefield, Connecticut which provides services to over 200,000 people from 15 surrounding towns. EDGEWATER has a medical staff of approximately 200 primary care physicians and specialists. EDGEWATER also has outpatient facilities in several communities. EDGEWATER’s mission is to make high quality medical care available to these communities without the inconvenience of having to travel to metropolitan hospitals. In furtherance of this mission, EDGEWATER makes available state of the art medical and surgical facilities.

John Thomas, M.D., is a surgeon who has been on the staff for 30 plus years. He has a very loyal patient base and has treated several generations of many families in the community. He has served as President of the Medical Staff; a trustee of Edgewater; and president of the largest surgical group at the hospital. He also serves on the boards of many community agencies including the local theatre group and the local hospice home. He has been a town meeting member in Wakefield for many years and is generally recognized as the town historian.

Edgewater recently employed several hospitalists to care for inpatients. Dr. Thomas has had difficulty interacting with the hospitalists as he prefers to personally provide all treatment himself. In fact, he is proud of saying that he has not taken a vacation in over thirty years because the last time he did, the care of his patients was jeopardized. Several of the hospitalists have complained to Administration that he has been rude to them in front of patients and staff and has countermanded their orders without consulting them or informing them of the change. They have also claimed that the medication and diagnostic orders he has entered for several patients, over their objection, have not been medically indicated. An independent expert review has agreed with their criticism. Attempts to discuss these complaints with Dr. Thomas have been unsuccessful and he generally dismisses the conversations with the statement:
“I will practice as I have for thirty years and do not intend to change because some person just out of training tells me I should. I am concerned for my patients. Not the feelings of some prima donna doctors!”

The most troubling matter occurred on a Sunday morning in August. Dr. Thomas had a post surgical patient on the surgical floor following abdominal surgery earlier that week. The Hospitalist on for the weekend saw his patient Saturday afternoon and wrote discharge orders for the patient to go home on Sunday. The patient’s family was upset by this order and called Dr. Thomas at his home. He immediately came to the hospital; demanded the Hospitalist come to the floor; and pursued a loud argument with the Hospitalist in the patient’s room in the presence of family and staff. The situation ended with Dr. Thomas taking the medical record in hand; crossing out the discharge orders; and entering orders that the patient was not to be discharged until Tuesday at the earliest.

The administrator brought the matter to the Hospital Trustees. The Trustees voted to suspend his privileges until he successfully completed 20 hours of coaching/training with a local Psychiatrist who had counseled other physicians about disruptive conduct at the Hospital. Dr. Thomas refused to participate in the training and requested a hearing pursuant to the medical staff by laws.

Dr. Thomas has retained a well known, criminal defense attorney who has made numerous requests including requests for the staff privilege records of other physicians; the records of other surgical patients; morbidity and mortality records for all surgeons; and any incident reports relating to surgical outcomes and/or incidents.

The process leading to the hearing has been very contentious. The hearing is scheduled to take several weeks of evening hearings to complete due to difficulty in scheduling all parties and panel members. The Chair of the Peer Review Committee has implored both parties to attempt to resolve the matter short of a hearing. Both sides have agreed to several hours of mediation with you.