

THE CAT'S PAW OR AGE DISCRIMINATION

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SYNOPSIS

Jane White, Vice President for Human Resources for Anderson Memorial Regional Hospital, must contend with an issue involving a staff pharmacist who had again violated hospital policy by overriding the computer database's drug interaction warning and filled a patient's script. The drug that was filled had the potential to cause serious problems when taken with other drugs the patient was currently taking. Now White, Terry Squires, the pharmacy manager and John Hart, the HR director for the hospital, had to make a decision. The fact that the staff pharmacist was a member of a protected class complicated the decision. Still another complication was the fact that another, much younger, pharmacist found and reported the violation to management. Additionally, a recent Supreme Court decision involving the "Cat's Paw" Theory had just been decided. White wondered what the next step that HR took should be.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading and studying this case, students should be able to:

1. Explain the complicated nature of the "cat's paw" theory in relationship to issues in the case.
2. Analyze the pros and cons of terminating the 56-year old pharmacist, Jack Creager.
3. Identify and justify a course of action for management.

APPLICATION

This case is intended for use in graduate and undergraduate human resource management and principles of management/supervision courses. It could also be used in courses emphasizing a business/government/society orientation.

KEY WORDS Cat's Paw Theory, age discrimination, protected classes of employees, human resources, management, due process

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