



For Immediate Release

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JNESO's Statement on Criminal Charges for Accidental Death Caused by Medication Error

North Brunswick, N.J. (March 31, 2022) – The recent conviction of a Nashville nurse for criminally negligent homicide after an accidental medication error resulted in the death of patient is not sitting well in the health care community.

[JNESO District Council 1](#), a labor union representing professional health care workers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, has joined several prominent health care organizations in an effort to protect their members, patients and their livelihoods by publicly opposing the licensure revocation or criminal charges for human error. These organizations include the American Nurses Association, Institute for Safe Medication Practices, the National Academy of Science, the American Hospital Association and American Organization for Nursing Leadership.

Nurse RaDonda Vaught, 38, was convicted on March 25 of criminally negligent homicide and abuse of an impaired adult after a medication error contributed to the death of patient in 2017 at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

JNESO stated:

“The recent license revocation and criminal prosecution of nurse RaDonda Vaught undermines the Just Culture and patient safety movements, thus endangering patients. It causes fear in providers and exacerbates staffing shortages. It deters people from entering nursing and accelerates the exodus from the field of experienced providers.

The criminal conviction of a nurse for a medication error places the weight of the mistake solely on her shoulders, without addressing the underlying contributing factors. Most importantly, it does not address latent errors; does nothing to prevent recurrence of similar errors; and does nothing to support the traumatized Second Victims of these events.

Errors do not occur in a vacuum but are associated with organizational and systemic failures. Institutions must address those failures and institute procedural safeguards to prevent adverse events. A thorough root cause analysis of errors cannot occur in environments where providers fear punitive responses to reporting errors.

In support of our members and of all health care professionals, we strongly oppose the punitive actions that were taken in this case and believe errors can be better prevented by providing nurses with the tools, staffing patterns, and procedural safeguards necessary to safely perform their duties.”

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