

corresp - Borhani



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
TWIN CITIES

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December 19, 1989

Nemat O. Borhani, MD ✓ 12/20  
Department of Community Health  
University of California  
Davis, CA 95616

(see attached)

Dear Nemat:

I was horrified to hear what you are having to face. May I suggest urgently that you pick up the 'phone and talk to Professors Goran Stockenstrom and William Mishler, recently sued by members of their faculty. They suffered terribly for a year but the "charges" were demonstrated not to be substantive. I think you might learn some language and legal strategies from them.

Please  
Send them  
their  
'phone #s  
12/20

Things are surely not happy in academia! I, too, am stepping down to let somebody else take the guff for awhile. There are many satisfactions in creating opportunities and jobs and helping people develop careers. But there are also unbelievably trivial annoyances that turn into major miseries.

Your friends wish you well.

Cordially,

Henry Blackburn, MD  
Professor and Director

/nmf

✓ 12/20

corresp- Borhani  
John Potter  
Dean Sushy  
R. Gore.

(enclose copy of the news article on Dr. Borhani and sexual harassment. Send it to Darwin Labarthe, Mack Smith, Ron Prineas, Jim Neaton, Marc Kjelsberg, Dwayne Reed, Russ Luepker, Richard Grimm, Millicent Higgins, Jack Farquhar, Mike Sprafka, Jerry Stamler.)

*[Handwritten signature]*

December 19, 1999

Dear Colleague:

I thought you would be interested in the enclosed. Life in academia is indeed getting complex!

Cordially,

*[Handwritten signature]*

Henry Blackburn, MD  
Professor and Director

/nmf

Enclosure

*P.S. And it was always complex with Nematt!*

# UCD prof accused of sex harassment

By Ken Chavez  
Bee Staff Writer

A University of California, Davis, medical school professor was accused in a sexual harassment lawsuit Tuesday of berating, humiliating and making sexual advances for more than 13 years toward the women who worked for him.

The suit also charges that university officials ignored worker complaints against Dr. Nemat O. Borhani — a former chairman of the school's community health department — because of his ability to procure yearly grants worth millions of dollars to the university.

"They (women employees) got the message: 'There's nothing we can do about him. He's just like that and if you don't like it, quit,'" said E.

Bradley Nelson, the Yacaville attorney who filed the suit in federal court in Sacramento.

Borhani could not be reached for comment. Nelson's clients — nine women who are current or former clerical workers in the community health department — are suing for \$6 million in damages.

The suit claimed that Dennis Shimek, an associate vice chancellor whose employee relations and academic affairs department registers sexual harassment complaints, was one of the officials who summarily rejected sexual misconduct allegations against Borhani.

Shimek was named as a defendant in the suit, along with university Chancellor Theodore Hullar and medical school dean Hibbard Williams.

"People can allege whatever they want to al-

lege," Shimek said. "We find sexual harassment totally unacceptable. Our interest and intent is to resolve cases."

The plaintiffs contend in the suit that as early as 1976, a group of female community health department employees had complained to Shimek about Borhani's behavior, and Shimek "told these women to transfer or quit if they couldn't take the heat."

Shimek said any sexual misconduct charges against Borhani would have been fully investigated, but he refused to divulge whether such charges had ever been filed against the professor or whether he was ever disciplined as a result of a sexual harassment complaint.

## Harassment

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Specifically, the suit alleged that Borhani was verbally abusive toward women in the office. He would make derogatory comments on their weight and physical appearance, subject them to public humiliation and insult as well as intimidate them with unsolicited kisses and sexual propositions, the suit said.

"This guy had a really bad temper and particularly when he directed it at women," Nelson said. "In one case, office equipment was thrown at one or more of these women."

"For the two years I was there, we were constantly yelled at, swore at, told we were inferior," said Joy Pace of Sacramento, Borhani's former secretary, and one of the employees involved in the suit.

The other plaintiffs are Kimberly Lane-Belard, Shirley Martin, Elaine Guidoux, Nikki Lattie, Golda Vargas, Karen Ostergard, Barbara Blake and Donna Coulston.

A heart disease specialist, Borhani was hired as the medical school's community health department chairman in 1968. He has authored numerous studies and articles on hypertension and was the recipient of awards from the American Medical Association in 1984 and 1988.

Borhani recently stepped down as chairman of the department, a move Nelson attributed to his investigation on behalf of his clients into the professor's conduct.

Shimek, however, said department chairmanships are regularly rotated among the faculty and that this change was part of the normal and usual process.

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