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Ex-TMC trauma head to get \$3.9 million to settle suit

By Hipolito R. Corella
and Chris Limberis
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Dr. Richard Carmona will receive \$3.9 million from Tucson Medical Center and another doctor to settle a lawsuit the trauma surgeon filed after he was fired from the hospital in 1993.

As part of yesterday's settlement, the hospital placed a full-page advertisement in today's Arizona Daily Star apologizing to Carmona, the former director of TMC's trauma center.

"Tucson Medical Center wishes to publicly acknowledge Dr. Carmona's excellent skills as a general and trauma surgeon and thank him for the job he did as Director of Tucson Medical Center's trauma program," the ad says.

"Tucson Medical Center regrets the emotional impact this matter has caused Dr. Carmona and his family and wishes him the best of luck in the future."

Carmona, one of Tucson's best-known doctors, filed the lawsuit in Pima County

Superior Court in April 1994, 11 months after he was abruptly dismissed.

Hospital records showed that Carmona was paid \$410,184 in the 1991 fiscal year.

Carmona is out of town until tomorrow and could not be reached yesterday for comment.

Silas Shultz, one of Carmona's attorneys, confirmed that a settlement was reached yesterday involving his client, TMC and Dr. Jerry Rogers, a former attending surgeon in the hospital's trauma center.

Shultz, however, refused to give specific information about the settlement, citing a confidentiality agreement among the parties in the case.

Mike Letson, a spokesman for TMC, said the confidentiality agreement also prevented him from discussing the case or the settlement.

But a source said the hospital agreed to pay Carmona \$3.5 million. Rogers, who was accused in the lawsuit of defamation

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Settlement

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and interfering with Carmona's relationship with TMC, must pay \$400,000.

TMC hired Carmona to be the director of its trauma center in July 1985, and he was terminated in June 1993, according to Carmona's 41-page lawsuit.

Carmona claimed, in part, wrongful discharge, emotional distress, fraud and defamation. He sought an unspecified amount of money in damages.

Carmona claimed in the lawsuit that TMC administrators told him he was terminated because University Medical Center would be taking over the trauma center.

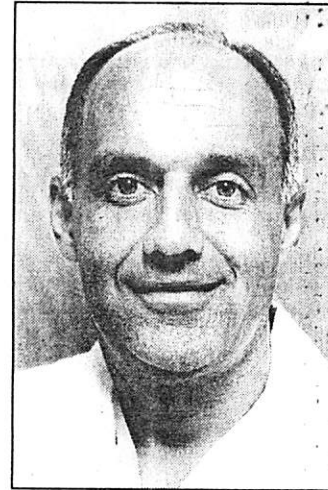
He maintained that one reason he was fired was because he voiced concerns about violations of hospital policies and federal laws, the lawsuit states.

During the eight years Carmona spent at TMC, he also was known widely for rescues he made while working with the Pima County Sheriff's Department Special Weapons and Tactics Team.

Carmona was hired in June to succeed Dr. Janis Johnson as administrator of Pima County's Kino Community Hospital.

County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry and members of the Board of Supervisors chose Carmona with hopes that his enthusiasm and energy would infuse the staff, often left demoralized by a lack of leadership, poor management and harsh attacks from Republican Supervisor Ed Moore.

The appointment was not without some criticism because Carmona led two key county committees that studied Kino and other parts of the county's health care system.



Star file photo

Dr. Richard Carmona

Supervisors voted 4-1 in August to approve a \$190,503 annual contract with Carmona. Moore dissented.

Carmona has moved swiftly to reorganize Kino, a 113-bed hospital on the southside that opened in 1977 with voter-approved bonds. But a reorganization that would cut nine positions has been stalled since last week.

Although employees were notified of transfers or layoffs, the Board of Supervisors confused the issue last week when it delegated review of the reorganization to the Integrated Health Care System Coordinating Council, a county advisory committee.

The council lacks the authority over Kino's management, but it nonetheless temporarily halted Carmona's reorganization plan. The hospital has 750 employees and is currently operating on a \$48.1 million budget this year.

Carmona also holds a position with the Sheriff's Department supervising inmate medical care at the Pima County Jail.