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A Texas judge ruled this doctor was not an expert. A Pennsylvania Republican invited him to testify on trans health care

By: [Stephen Caruso](#) - September 15, 2020 7:24 am



Dr. Quentin Van Meter testified at a March 12, 2020 House hearing on trans youth health issues. (Pa. House feed)

A physician testifying before a House panel Monday as part of a “fact-finding mission” on gender-affirming care was disqualified by a judge earlier this year as an expert on trans health care.

Dr. Quentin Van Meter, an Atlanta-based doctor and president of a conservative pediatric group, was one of three medical practitioners who testified before the Pennsylvania House Health Committee on the science behind gender dysphoria, or the feeling of being misaligned with the sex you were born with.

The first two Pennsylvania-based experts argued that gender-affirming care, including puberty-blocking drugs, were a safe way to help a young person grappling with their identity.

Then, lawmakers heard from Van Meter, who has previously called such treatment “medical experimentation based on wishful social theory,” but in a February 2020 court ruling, was “discredited as an expert” on hormone treatment.

The ruling came in a Texas divorce case overseen by [Judge Germaine Tanner](#) of Harris County.

She found that Van Meter could not offer expert testimony on “the legal question of whether an adolescent transgender child should be administered puberty blockers and whether affirmation of an incongruent gender in a child is harmful or not,” according to a court document acquired by the Capital-Star.

The case is now sealed, but Douglas Ray York, an attorney in the case, confirmed the document’s authenticity to the Capital-Star.

The divorce case involved a child who was undergoing gender-affirming treatment. The mother wanted to end the treatment, the father did not.

York said that Van Meter’s testimony was thrown out because he did not offer a fact-driven opinion on the impact of puberty blocking drugs.

“He says all transgender youth are delusional and need psychiatric help, and the court took that and said wait a minute, his opinion tended to be more agenda driven than scientific driven,” York told the Capital-Star earlier this year.

He compared Van Meter’s testimony to a “chocolate easter bunny. It looks great on the outside, but you penetrate it, it’s hollow.”

Van Meter spoke for just about 25 minutes Monday.

“No adolescent is capable of making a decision, with informed consent ... of what that adolescent will feel like when they are an adult, and they are infertile, their genitalia [doesn’t] work,” Van Meter testified.

It was his second appearance before the House Health Committee this year. In [March](#), he appeared at a nearly three-hour long hearing alongside Dr. Stephen Levine, a Case Western Reserve University professor who has also been [skeptical](#) of hormone treatment.

The hearings were organized by Rep. Paul Schemel, R-Franklin, chair of the subcommittee on health care, because Pennsylvania’s CHIP program pays for gender-affirming care for children in low-income families.

The experts picked to support gender-affirming care were suggested by state Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine, who is a trans woman, Schemel said. She was originally supposed to testify herself, but had to cancel due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schemel added he was aware of the Texas judge's ruling, and disagreed with it.

"I think that the judge had actually not analyzed all of Dr. Van Meter's work," Schemel said, adding: "The only thing that would disqualify him in the eyes of some is that he has a divergent opinion."

Van Meter did not reply to a request for comment.

This isn't the only controversial stance Van Meter has taken. He also has advocated for [conversion therapy](#), or trying to change someone's sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual. The practice is opposed by most mainstream medical groups, [such as](#) the American Psychiatric Association.

In neighboring Ohio, Van Meter is also being used as an expert in a lawsuit demanding that the state allow trans individuals to change their birth sex on their birth certificate, as reported by the [Ohio Capital Journal](#), a sibling site of the Capital-Star.

He also is the current president of the American College of Pediatricians. The Southern Poverty Law Center has also named the [organization](#) a hate group for "calling homosexual relationships promiscuous, a danger to children, unstable, and claiming that LGBTQ people experience 'shortened lifespans.'"

Speaking to the news site [Christian Headlines](#) in 2014, Van Meter said ACP was not religiously affiliated, but said members were "moral people who are like-minded, and want truth, and want what's best for children."

[Studies show](#) that LGBTQ, and in particular transgender teens, are more likely to contemplate and commit suicide.

For example, according to the Trevor Project, a national LGBTQ youth suicide prevention organization, 35 percent of LGBTQ people under 25 had [attempted suicide](#), compared to 7 percent of cisgendered individuals in the same age range.

Speaking Monday, Van Meter downplayed those statistics, saying they were the result of a skewed sample.

"We are basically being blackmailed by the concept that these kids will kill themselves," without gender affirming care, Van Meter told the committee.

But [Dr. Katharine Dalke](#), a psychiatrist focused on LGBTQ health at Penn State Hershey Medical Center, argued that the support and acceptance of their parents, as well as access to puberty blocking drugs could address the mental health concerns.

"The problems are not intrinsic to being transgender, but rather due to a combination of gender incongruence and social stigma," Dalke said.

The prescriptions do not "cause permanent changes in an adolescent's body. Instead, it pauses puberty, providing time to determine if a child's gender identity is long lasting. It also gives children and their families time to think about or plan for the psychological, medical, developmental, social and legal issues ahead," [according](#) to the Mayo Clinic.

The drugs also can minimize the need for costly medical operations down the line for people to transition to their preferred gender later in life, Dalke added.

Republican lawmakers peppered both Dalke and another witness, Nadia Dowshen of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, with questions about the earliest age they would prescribe hormone therapy or conduct any medical procedures.

Both Dalke and Dowshen said that teens between the aged of 14 and 16 would likely be the start date for any hormone use, and only after rounds of therapy and with the consent of parents. Surgical options wouldn't be considered until the gender non-conforming individual was an adult, they added.

Speaking after the meeting, Schemel said he did not have any policy goals in mind, and reminded lawmakers throughout the meeting that no votes were yet scheduled.

Van Meter did not recommend any specific policy Monday. But in his native Georgia, he did back [at least one proposal](#): Making it a felony to provide hormone treatment to a minor.



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