
Long Island

LI woman sues medical practice, claims age, gender discrimination

Updated May 3, 2017 11:49 PM

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A Long Island woman sued the medical practice that fired her after 43 years on the job, saying executives “fabricated” performance concerns because she had spoken against the company’s “unlawful” practices toward other employees.

Robyn Perlman, 63, of Port Washington, accused the Ear, Nose and Throat Associates of New York of age and gender discrimination as well as retaliation against her for more than a year. Her federal suit, filed Wednesday in Brooklyn, says she was kicked out so fast on March 29 that she had no time to say goodbye to colleagues or pack her personal items.

Perlman, who rose from part-time file clerk to director of operations, had helped the Flushing, Queens-based company grow from a few employees to 240 and was instrumental in creating its profitable audiology business, the suit said. The practice lists 11 Long Island offices on its website.

But she had also accused the company of firing a woman because of a disability that was not going to affect her work and of failing to give doctors their rightful share of revenue, according to the suit.

An attorney for the medical practice called Perlman’s allegations about her treatment “baseless” and accusations of unlawful practices “wildly inaccurate.”

Perlman claimed executives and board members started shutting her out of the daily

operations, including hiring executives to take over her duties and barring her access to medical records.

In June, the company cut her salary from \$375,000 to \$150,000, the complaint said, and a vice president, Dr. Stephen Warman, called her a “dinosaur” in refusing to discuss her compensation.

"It's crazy to say that somebody who worked for 43 years and built a practice is a bad performer when you're firing her three weeks after she hires a lawyer and claims she's being discriminated against," said her attorney, David Gottlieb of Manhattan.

Ellen Storch of Woodbury said Perlman's pay was cut as a "direct reflection of her performance," but she declined to cite details. But she was actually let go because her job was outsourced to a human resources consulting firm, the attorney said.

"Miss Perlman was treated fairly and indeed generously during her employment," Storch said. "Because the defendants have engaged in no wrongdoing, they intend to vigorously defend her claims."

In February, about a week after Perlman underwent surgery to remove a cancerous tumor, the chief financial officer, Doug Walerstein, "fabricated" concerns about her performance and later began an audit of her work, the suit said.

Her firing and exit from the office took less than two minutes, and there was a "smirk" on Walerstein's face as he escorted her out, Perlman said in the suit.

"They were taking gratification out of firing her," Gottlieb said.

He said Perlman will start looking for a new job.