

# Yale promoted university doctor to lead inclusion and diversity efforts despite sexual harassment complaints, according to new suit

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Six doctors at Yale University in a newly filed lawsuit accused the Ivy League school of promoting an award-winning physician to head diversity and inclusion efforts at the medical school despite the allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct they raised against him.

The group of women further claimed Yale's response to their accusations against Dr. Manuel Lopes Fontes is only the latest example of the university's failure to act on such complaints. According to the suit, first reported by [NBC News](#), the high-ranking professor forcibly kissed the doctors he supervised, gave them unwanted neck massages and touched them without consent.

Fontes, who additionally served as division chief of cardiac anesthesiology at Yale New Haven Hospital and as director of clinical research for Yale School of Medicine, was also accused of retaliating against the women who turned down his advances.

One anesthesiology fellow claimed Fontes berated her when she resisted his come-ons while an assistant professor said he changed her work assignments after she complained about him.

"Sexual harassment has no place in medicine or higher education," the doctors' lawyers, Michael Willemin and Tanvir Rahman, said in a statement.

"And Yale University, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, is not above being held accountable for its alleged history of protecting powerful male doctors at the expense of its female employees and students."

According to the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court on Thursday, Dr. Roberta Hines, who is the chair of Yale's anesthesiology department, dismissed complaints against Fontes that suggested he discriminated against an assistant professor because of her pregnancy.

Hines allegedly responded by saying Fontes was "just being a boy."

A year prior, Hines also allegedly waved off claims from an anesthesiologist resident, who said Fontes made suggestive comments about her body.

"Boys will be boys," Hines told her, according to the lawsuit.

Not long after, Fontes was promoted to lead diversity initiatives in the anesthesiology department.

"This lawsuit is intended to give a voice to those women whose stories of harrowing sexual misconduct at Yale University have been stifled for far too long, and to bring about justice against both the powerful men that have targeted them, and a University who have protected and supported these men," the lawsuit reads.

Karen Peart, a Yale spokeswoman, said the school takes "charges of harassment very seriously," noting officials took appropriate action when three of the suit's plaintiffs came forward. They were offered resources under Title IX but "none of the plaintiffs chose to file a formal complaint."

"Yale nonetheless has been working to resolve the issues raised," Peart added. "As in all such cases, Yale is working to ensure that the processes we use to find and act on facts are fair to all involved parties."

The suit additionally alleges that Yale hired Fontes in 2015 even though he faced similar allegations of misconduct at both Duke and Cornell Universities

"Dr. Fontes' sordid history of sexually harassing and acting inappropriately towards female subordinates ... is well known," it reads. "Yet, Yale welcomed him with open arms, and he remains a distinguished leader within the anesthesiology department."

Fontes' attorney, Robert Mitchell, has denied all allegations of sexual misconduct, saying his client has been "vilified without a fair opportunity to defend himself." He went on to dismiss the allegations as "a vindictive backroom campaign full of scandalous and vicious falsehood, rumor and innuendo."

Mitchell added: "Dr. Fontes will respond and the truth will shame them as well as those who have prejudged him without affording him even a hint of due process."