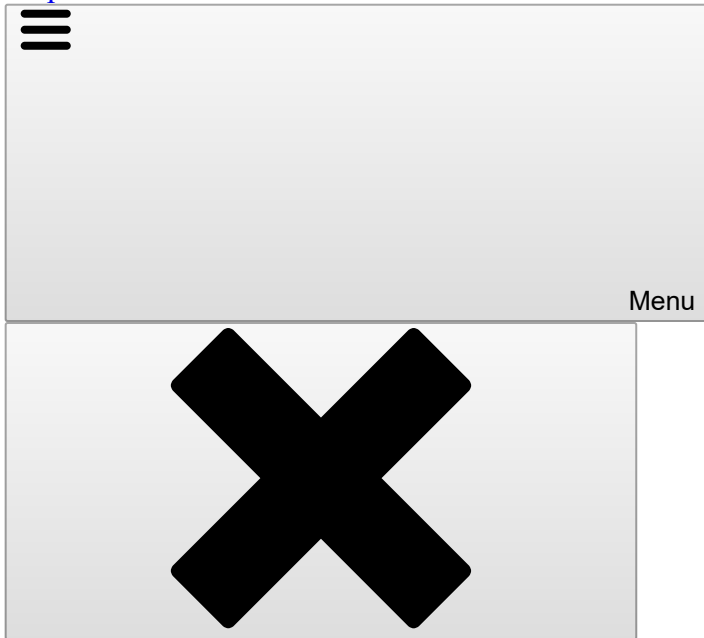
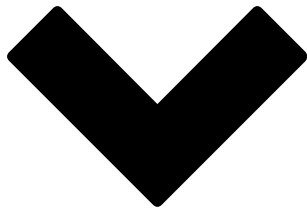
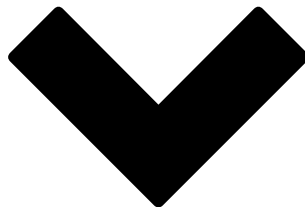


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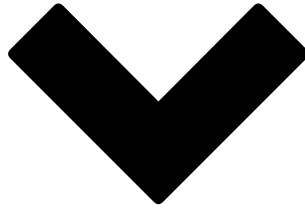


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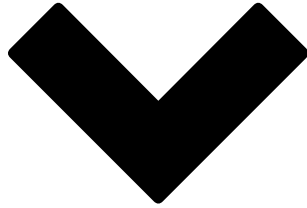


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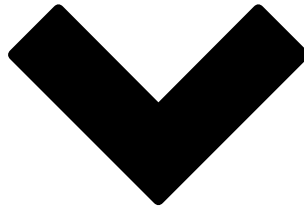
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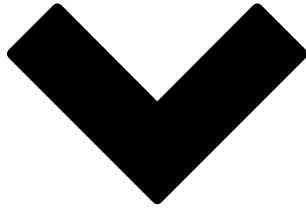
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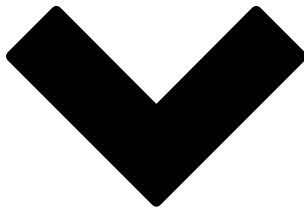
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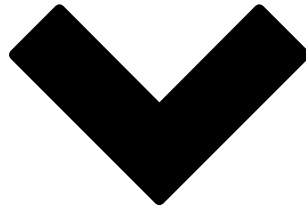
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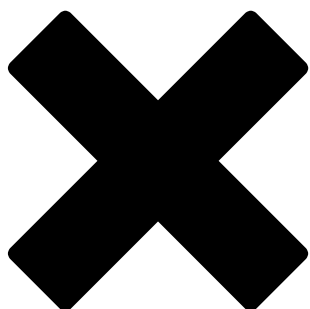
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ER doctor who criticized Bellingham hospital's coronavirus protections has been fired

March 27, 2020 at 7:52 pm Updated March 28, 2020 at 5:45 pm



Dr. Ming Lin has worked in the emergency room at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center in Bellingham for 17 years. (Eric Miller)



By

[Ron Judd](#)

Seattle Times staff reporter

BELLINGHAM – An emergency room physician who publicly decried what he called a lack of protective measures against the novel coronavirus at his workplace, PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center, has been fired.

Ming Lin, who has worked at the hospital for 17 years and became a local cause célèbre for his [pleas for more safety equipment](#) and more urgent measures to protect staff, was informed of his termination as he was preparing for a shift at the hospital Friday afternoon, he said.

“I got a message that said, ‘Your shift has been covered,’” Lin told The Seattle Times. He phoned his supervisor and was told, “You’ve been terminated.” Lin said he was told he would be contacted by human resources staff from his employer, [TeamHealth](#), a national firm that contracts with PeaceHealth’s emergency department.

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TeamHealth could not immediately be reached for comment. A spokesperson for PeaceHealth St. Joseph confirmed that Lin had been fired but said the hospital had no comment because Lin wasn’t a PeaceHealth employee.

Lin said supervisors threatened his employment more than a week ago after he spoke to reporters and made social media posts accusing PeaceHealth of a lack of urgency to protect health care workers from the virus.

Lin said he was told to take down his social media posts about the hospital but refused.

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He continued to [post daily updates](#) on Facebook after shifts at the emergency room, although many of his posts had shifted away from hospital practices to efforts to help secure more protective equipment for hospital workers.

Specifically, Lin had written that PeaceHealth St. Joseph refused to screen all patients outside the hospital, rather than in an often-crowded emergency room waiting area where the virus could easily spread. Two emergency department workers, who both asked not to be named for fear of reprisals, told The Times they shared Lin's concerns about the possible spread of infection because of that practice.

Lin and other doctors have also persistently complained about the availability of testing approved by PeaceHealth, even as testing capacity ramps up in Washington state.

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[Coronavirus testing troubles persist as patients are turned away, even as lab capacity in Seattle expands](#)

Hospital administrators this week announced a series of protective measures, such as temperature screening of staff entering the building, plans to enhance separation of staff from infected patients, and the availability of tents to conduct outside screening if deemed necessary.

Lin and other hospital staff noted that most or all of these measures came after Lin's treatises prompted a community outcry. Meanwhile, Lin maintains the measures fail to meet standards set by other regional hospitals and even smaller health care facilities.

PeaceHealth St. Joseph is the only emergency facility for some 250,000 people in the state's northwest corner.

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"Several" hospital staff have tested positive for the virus, the hospital's chief executive, Charles Prosper, announced this week, [insisting that the infections were unrelated to their work](#) at the hospital.

Whatcom County to date has recorded 92 positive COVID-19 tests, a large number of them at a single facility, [Shuksan Healthcare Center](#) in Bellingham's York neighborhood. County health officials said Thursday that the virus had spread to "several" other local senior facilities. Four county residents have died.

Lin said he has been touched by a groundswell of support from residents and health care workers in Bellingham.

"I'll be OK," said Lin, a longtime physician whose ER work included a stint at a trauma center near the World Trade Center in New York City during the 9/11 terror attacks. "It's a blow to my ego more than anything."

Coronavirus resources

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