Is Trump's Pick for CDC Director Too Good to Be True?

Ob-gyn Brenda Fitzgerald was the commissioner of Georgia's Department of Public Health. Watch her TEDx Talk from 2014 [VIDEO].

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At first glance, it's surprising that Donald Trump picked Brenda Fitzgerald, MD, as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Surprising because, well, compared to his other federal appointees, she seems competent and experienced.

Fitzgerald is a trained obstetrician-gynecologist who worked for three decades in private practice before becoming Georgia's public health commissioner in 2011, according to a press release from Health and Human Services (HHS Secretary Tom Price initially appointed Fitzgerald to the post).

Science magazine adds that Fitzgerald made access to long-term contraceptives easier for women on Medicaid and helped form the Ebola screening program at the Atlanta airport, which laid the groundwork for the Zika screening program. However, she had also directed the state to cancel a program in which it provided test kits for sexually transmitted infections to Planned Parenthood.

Fitzgerald also has a political past, having run and lost as a Republican candidate for Congress and served as an adviser to then-Representative Newt Gingrich. During her 1994 election bid, CNN reports, Fitzgerald said she supported certain restrictions on abortion, such as parental notification but that ultimately the decision should be made between a woman and her doctor.

Does this mean Trump has appointed someone without ethical and intellectual baggage and conflicts of interests?

The high HIV rates in Georgia, as POZ has reported, certainly don't speak well for her tenure there. Then there's the fact that Fitzgerald treated men as well as women at her OB/GYN practice. That's because, according to Forbes, besides being board-certified in obstetrics and gynecology, Fitzgerald is a fellow in "anti-aging medicine"—something she promotes on the Georgia Department of Public Health's website.

Forbes points out that the American Board of Medical Specialties doesn't recognize the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, which promotes the use of intravenous nutritional therapy,

bioidentical hormone replacement therapy and pellet therapy, in which pellets containing hormones are placed under the skin.

“[B]ioridiculous” is how Nanette Santoro, MD, chair of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, described the use of bioidentical hormones in a recent guest post on the North American Menopause Society’s MenoPause blog.

Santoro described a patient whose hair had fallen out because she had been rubbing testosterone cream into her skin every day and overdosed. Another patient, age 52, had estrogen levels higher than when she was pregnant because she had had estrogen pellets inserted under her skin months earlier.

Whether this makes Fitzgerald a snake oil saleswoman will likely take a back seat to more pressing concerns, such as oversight of the CDC at a time when the Trump administration wants to slash $1.2 billion from its budget, including $149 million from HIV prevention efforts.

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