

# Globalization response of eeoc

Business



The example cases provided deal with alleged discrimination in its various forms. The first news item I found with a similar story outside the US was that of the taxi drivers at Minneapolis/St. Paul airport, who refused to take passengers who carried alcohol. This is a fascinating example, as it asks the question whether someone is being refused of a service on religious grounds, or whether the taxi drivers are exercising their own right to their beliefs.

In the last seven years there have been two similar cases in the United Kingdom. Both cases involved couples who were refused an emergency contraception pill at a supermarket pharmacy. In one case, the pharmacist would not sell the contraceptive to the couple because of her “ high morals”, in the other case the reason was the pharmacist’s religious beliefs.

Interestingly enough, one of the refusals came at a pharmacy in a store run by Asda, which is part of the Wal-Mart group. The Time article mentioned a US court upholding Wal-Mart’s decision to fire a Roman-Catholic pharmacist who refused to dispense birth-control pills. Time reported the Minnesota taxi case with a mix of facts.

The sub-heading shows opinion, but the article is mostly factual, as it depicted the scenario and how the small story grew once the mor sensationalist media picked it up. It also explained how the taxi drivers’ interpretation of Islamic law is flawed and quoted the airport’s representative and one of the taxi drivers, who admitted that the cabbies would have to respect any forthcoming judge’s decision against their actions. Overall, it appeared that the Time article presented itself as balanced but there was a hint of taking sides against both the taxi drivers and the reactive sections of the media. In the UK however, the BBC News website handled a

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contraceptive refusal case without underlying opinion and with equal weighting of quotes from the supermarket and the couple involved in the case. The website also quoted the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Code of Ethics and Standards, which regulates treatment of customers.

This Code states that a pharmacist has a right to refuse a certain treatment based on his/her own religious or ethical beliefs, as long as alternatives are suggested. An almost identical case in British national newspapers, the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph, was reported in a different way. They filled most of their articles with quotes from the couple, with only a paragraph's explanation of the pharmacists' code. They showed an ethical disagreement with the pharmacist's actions and the employer's response. Yet, unlike the Time sub-heading there was no editorial comment in the articles.

There were therefore several similarities in the US and UK media's response to these cases. They explained the legal situation in a factual way and posed the ethical question. With the exception of BBC News, they all took a subtle ethical stance. While the British media tended to take a view against the employer's support for the pharmacist, the US media looked more at its own extremities. It is also interesting to see that even where the British media firmly took the side of the customers, there was no mention of firing the pharmacists involved. Where the US reporter asked the taxi driver about how he would react to a judgment on his case, the question of a possible lawsuit and resulting judgment was not raised in the British articles.

I formed the impression that the UK media respected the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Code, but they conclude that the pharmacists in

these cases should have been more helpful. The fact that the customers affected in the British cases merely wrote a letter of complaint to the employers, who in turn stood by their pharmacist, shows a difference with the US case. The cases showed that people are less litigious in the UK than they are in the US.