

# CHUM urologist allegedly rejected patient because he spoke English

Patient's daughter says Dr. Luc Valiquette publicly mocked her father in French, called him an immigrant said he was a burden to society.

CHARLIE FIDELMAN, MONTREAL GAZETTE  
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Zbigniew Malysa recounts how he was treated by a doctor at the CHUM hospital and says there is no question of a misunderstanding. Malysa is seen in his home, which is decorated in African art from his travels and gifts from African friends over his lifetime. ALLEN MCINNIS / MONTREAL GAZETTE

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**A Montreal woman says her father was denied critical medical attention at Montreal's new French-language superhospital because he had asked to be served in English.**

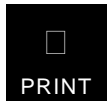
ADJUST

Suzie Malysa says the treating doctor, a urologist, publicly mocked her father in French, called him an immigrant and a burden to society, and then tore up a resident doctor's notes, threw them in the garbage and left the room.





Malysa said her father, Zbigniew Malysa, 67, was told Wednesday that he would have to get his tests done elsewhere, for example, at the Verdun hospital “where it would be cheaper.”



A nurse and patient advocate, Malysa says language politics should never be a barrier to anyone needing medical attention.

Centre hospitalier de l’Université de Montréal officials say they are aware of the case.

“I’ll get back to you as soon as possible,” said Lucie Dufresne of CHUM’s media relations team.

The hospital is looking into allegations concerning urologist Luc Valiquette.

Malysa said her father, a retired Canadian citizen of Polish origin, has heart arrhythmia and uncontrollable blood pressure. Although he speaks several languages including Russian, German, Polish, English and some French, when it comes to his health, he prefers to be addressed in English because it’s critical to his understanding.

Zbigniew Malysa had been referred by his English-speaking specialist to a urologist at the CHUM to be tested for kidney disease because he has resistant hypertension, which can potentially cause fatal strokes. He was initially seen by a pleasant resident, who took his blood pressure and medical history, in English, while waiting for the urologist, his daughter said.

Malysa told the Montreal Gazette that she filed a complaint with the hospital ombudsman, the provincial order of physicians, and the human rights commission.

In her complaint, which she also posted to Facebook, Malysa said that Dr. Valiquette went out of his way to exaggerate the pronunciation of her father’s name, turned to his medical residents and said in French, “What kind of name is that, Serbian, Ukrainian...? Definitely an Eastern European immigrant.”

When her father asked to be addressed in English, Valiquette allegedly replied: “You’ve been here for 30 years and you still don’t speak French?”

According to Malysa, Valiquette tore up the consult notes saying: “You are not having these tests done, you immigrants are too much of a financial strain for the government.”

In an interview with the Montreal Gazette, Malysa said her heart sank when her father recounted his experience at the CHUM.

“He was traumatized,” she said. “Such discrimination should never occur in the health care setting when you are trying to save a life.”

Malysa said officials from Verdun Hospital called Thursday morning to offer her father an appointment for kidney tests at their facility — and the physician would be Dr. Valiquette, who has treating privileges there, too.

“My father refused,” Malysa said. He won’t have anything to do with a doctor who treated him with such disrespect, she said..

Her [Facebook post](#) has been shared more than 1,350 times and garnered

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hundreds of responses, including an offer of free medical services from a Montreal urologist operating a private clinic.

Officials at the Quebec Health Department said they were not aware of the situation until a reporter alerted them late afternoon.

“A complaint has been addressed to the CHUM. Therefore, I will not comment on this case specifically,” Quebec Health Minister Ga etan Barrette later said via his press attach e, Catherine Audet, in an email. “According to me, if such things have been said, it is unacceptable.”

Shortly after contacting the Health Department, the hospital said the case is now in the hands of competent authorities, such as the complaints commissioner, and will be treated in accordance with the governing rules.



“While CHUM staff strive daily to accommodate patients whose mother tongue is not French, and interpretation services are provided as needed, it must be understood, however, that the CHUM is not a public health network facility that’s designated to provide all of its services in English.”

CHUM’s spokesperson Dufresne followed with another email: “I should have added that Dr. Luc Valiquette told us that this was a terrible (malentendu) misunderstanding and that he would communicate with the patient and his family shortly.”

For Malysa, it’s not clear what the “malentendu” could be.

“He stripped my father of his dignity,” she said. “I can’t accept that.”

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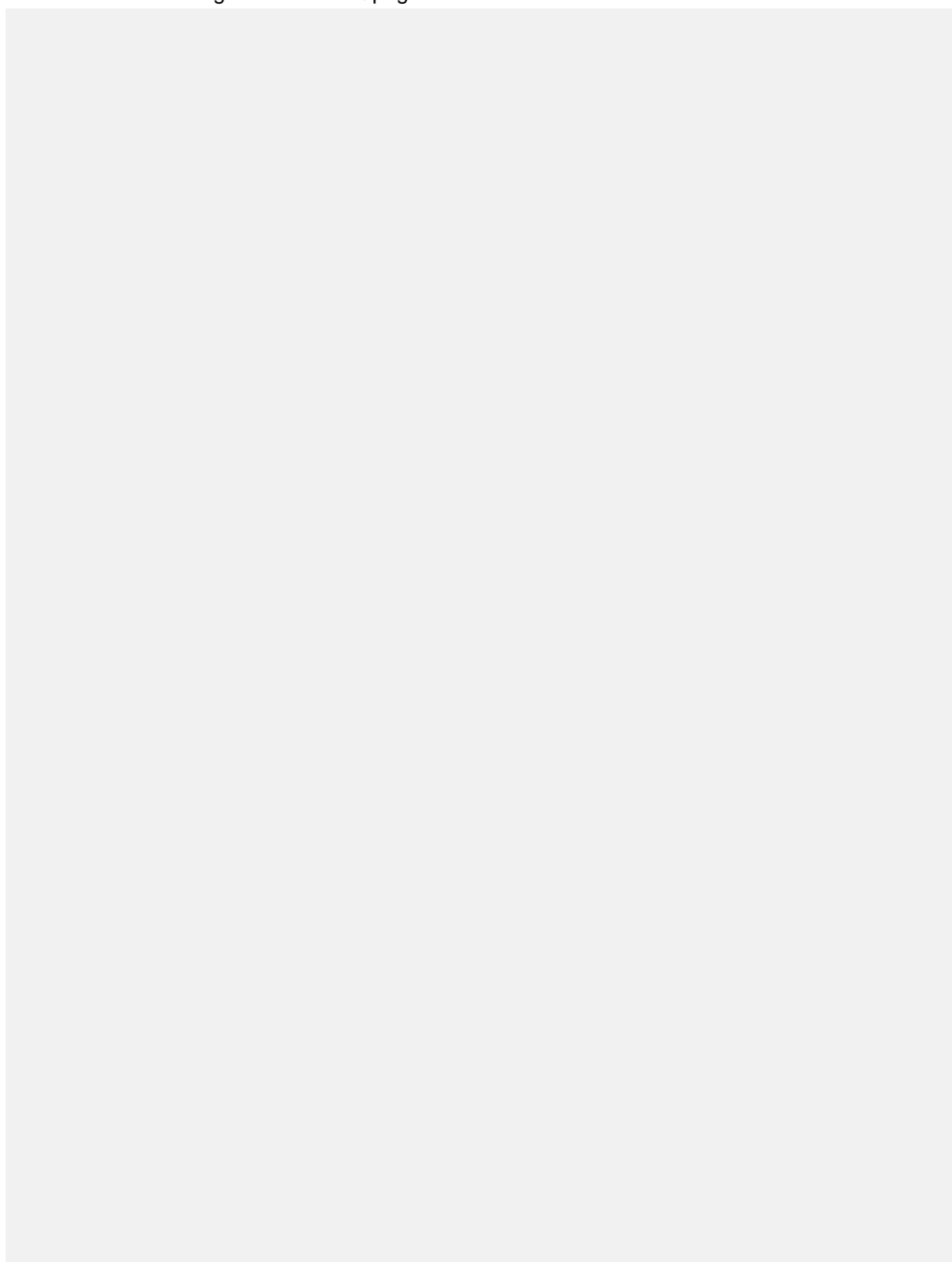
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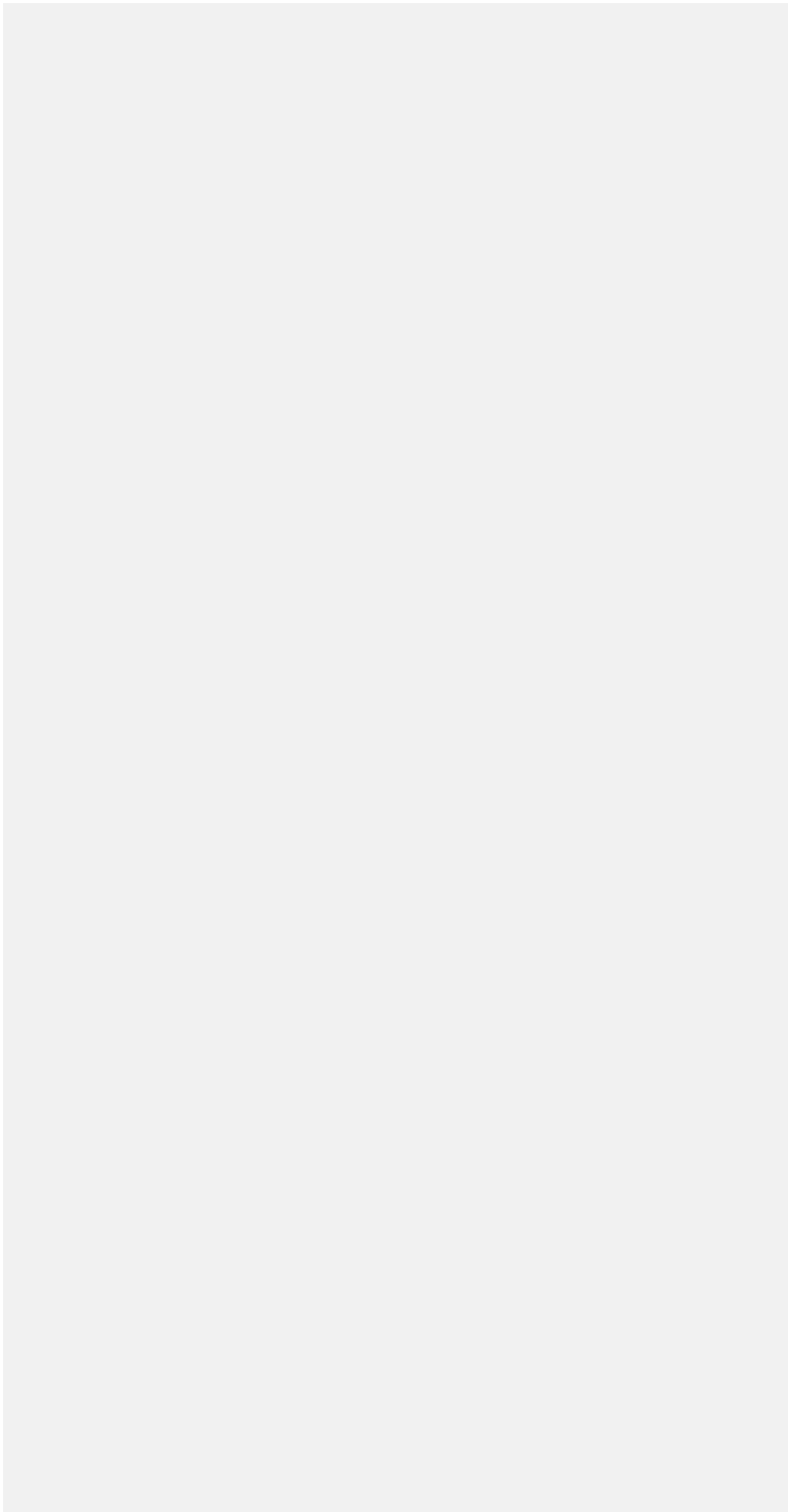
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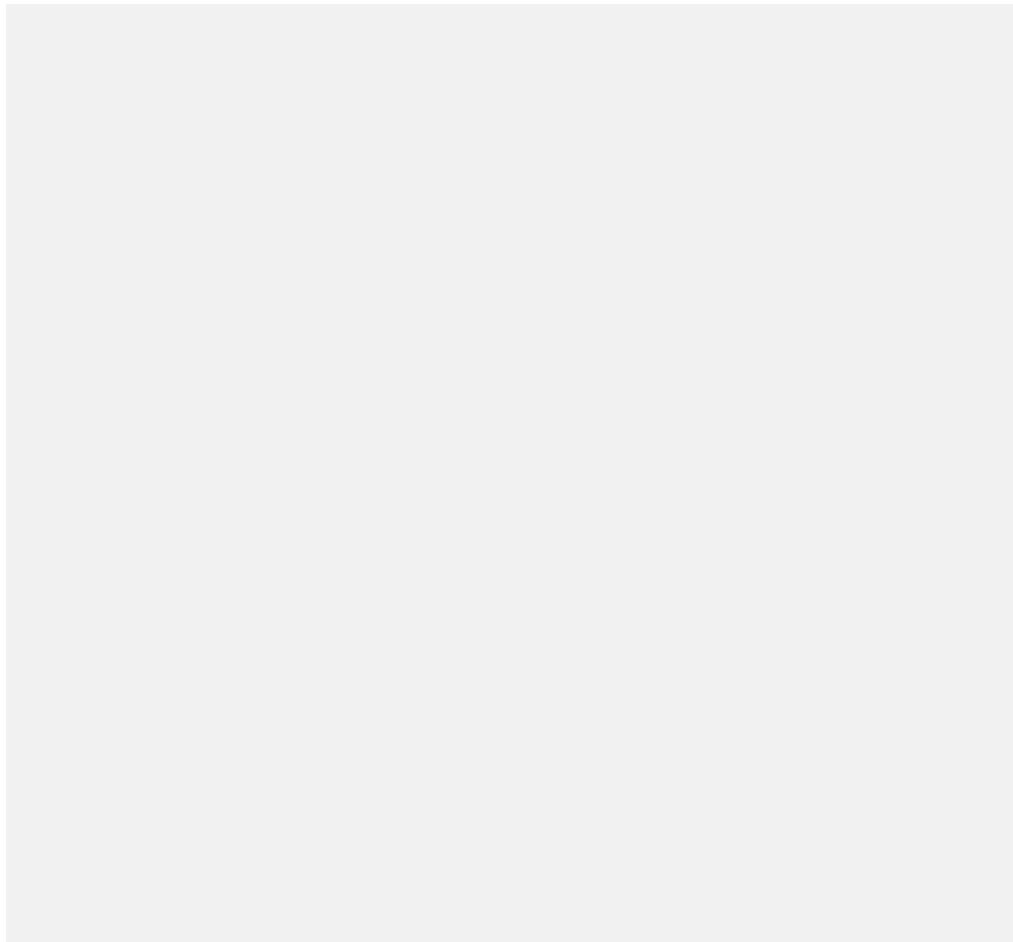
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