

Following is an Opinion Editorial submitted for publication in the Los Angeles Times.

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Larry Nassar abused his position as a doctor

The op-ed piece published on January 26, 2018 by the *Los Angeles Times*, and written by Virginia Heffernan, suffers from many inaccuracies and outright falsehoods. The Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California, which represents over 8,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and almost 1,500 osteopathic medical students in the state, would like to correct several of those.

It is clear that Ms. Heffernan has strong feelings of empathy for the hundreds of girls victimized by Larry Nassar, a convicted pedophile and sexual abuser. OPSC shares her feelings of disgust and fury that such a monster was allowed access to so many victims for so long. These are questions that must be answered by anyone who worked alongside or supervised him.

Ms. Heffernan misdirects her anger, however, at osteopathic medicine and specifically at osteopathic manipulation instead of focusing on the criminal acts of Nassar and the possible negligence of his supervisor and coworkers.

She implies that because Nassar was an osteopathic physician he is not a doctor. DOs are licensed physicians - fully trained doctors equivalent in every licensing aspect to MDs. DOs and MDs have equivalent licensing requirements and board certification. Like MDs, DOs complete four years of medical school and three to seven years of residency training. DOs are considered equal to MDs in every facet of law. Therefore, by virtue of his education and training, Nassar was qualified to use the title of doctor.

It is clear, however, that his acts were **not** medicine. They were criminal acts meant to harm his victims and gratify himself. This is irreconcilable with the primary tenet of every medical action, to first do no harm. Therefore, when he was assaulting these girls, he was not acting as a doctor but as a monster.

Further, Ms. Heffernan attempts to equate Nassar's abusive actions to a form of manipulation. The manner in which he "treated" his victims should not be construed as any form of a medical procedure; it was nothing short of assault.

Ms. Heffernan also makes an attempt to link the founder of osteopathic medicine to child abuse and violence. Her statement is patently false and inflammatory. Nowhere in any osteopathic

literature is there any reference to violence or child abuse, and a journalist with Ms. Heffernan's qualifications and education should be required to cite any suggestion otherwise.

The osteopathic community, and medical professionals everywhere, need to remain diligent in uncovering and stamping out abuse of any kind, and should have zero tolerance for physicians who use their position and title to hurt patients. But OPSC condemns Ms. Heffernan and the *Los Angeles Times* for the lapse of journalistic integrity in publishing her op-ed riddled with inaccurate, inflammatory statements.