New CDC Director Resigns Amid Criticism for Buying Tobacco Stock

Brenda Fitzgerald faced other questions about conflicts of interest. Anne Schuchat has been named the CDC's acting director.

January 31, 2018 By Trent Straube

Brenda Fitzgerald, MD, resigned as the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the federal agency that oversees and protects the nation's public health, Politico reports.

Anne Schuchat, MD, will be the CDC's acting director, according to Stat News:

> Updated: Dr. Anne Schuchat, a long-time CDC official, has been named acting director of the agency after the resignation of Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald over problematic investments, including some in tobacco and pharma. https://t.co/z8xTS9fhaG
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> — STAT (@statnews) January 31, 2018

The resignation comes a day after Politico reported that Fitzgerald had bought stock in Japan Tobacco. This is problematic because she is supposed to be leading the CDC's efforts to reduce tobacco use. She had also purchased tens of thousands of dollars of stock in pharmaceutical companies Merck & Co. and Bayer as well as insurance company Humana, according to Politico.

An ob-gyn and former Georgia Department of Public Health commissioner, Fitzgerald took over the CDC in July. (For more about her career and to watch her TEDx Talk from 2014, click "Is Trump's Pick for CDC Director Too Good to Be True?")

Since her appointment, Fitzgerald has been under scrutiny for possible conflicts of interest. As

national advocacy group AIDS United wrote in a January 26 blog post on POZ.com:

> Despite being on the job for seven months, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Brenda Fitzgerald has yet to speak publicly before Congress about her agency's activities because of conflicts of interest derived from financial holdings from which she has yet to divest. This past Wednesday, Fitzgerald was unable to testify before a Senate panel on 21st century public health threats. It is still unclear what issues Fitzgerald is barred from testifying on as a result of her finances, although an ethics agreement she released in December lists the areas of cancer detection and health information technology as key areas of conflict, while Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) has said Fitzgerald's conflicts extend to the opioid crisis as well.

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