CASE AND COMMENTARY
Being the "Company Doctor"
Commentary by Faith Lagay, PhD

Case
For the past 2 years, Mr. Bradford has been working for XYZ Inc. Over the past few months, he feels that he has been denied several promotions and that his superiors do not appreciate his contributions. Consequently, he has been experiencing some work-related stress that has resulted in severe headaches. He sees Dr. X, a family physician retained by his employer. Dr. X believes that Mr. Bradford is suffering from anxiety and depression, and refers him to a psychiatrist. Dr. X divulges this information to Mr. Bradford's employer who places it in his employment file. Mr. Bradford eventually learns about this and complains to his supervisor. His supervisor maintains that the company has a valid interest in knowing this information. Moreover, the supervisor claims that no patient-physician relationship was ever formed, so the doctor had no obligation to maintain confidentiality. Mr. Bradford is incensed about this situation: "Don't doctors swear to some oath that requires them to keep the confidences of their patients?"

Questions for Discussion
1. Did Dr. X violate the Hippocratic Oath and breach the confidences of Mr. Bradford?
2. In the context of a workplace exam, does Dr. X have any obligations to the employer?


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