

SUMMARY

DR. SAJI ABRAHAM CHACKO (CPSO #89816)

1. Disposition

On March 22, 2017, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (“the Committee”) required family physician Dr. Chacko to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to the standard of his medical care and documentation, particularly in regard to narcotics.

2. Introduction

The College received information raising concerns about Dr. Chacko’s prescribing of fentanyl patches to drug-seeking individuals and subsequently, the Committee approved the Registrar’s appointment of investigators to conduct a broad review of Dr. Chacko’s practice.

3. Committee Process

As part of this investigation, the Registrar appointed a Medical Inspector to review a number of Dr. Chacko’s patient charts, interview Dr. Chacko, and submit a written report to the Committee.

A General Panel of the Committee, consisting of public and physician members, met to review the relevant records and documents related to the investigation. The Committee always has before it applicable legislation and regulations, along with policies that the College has developed, which reflect the College’s professional expectations for physicians practising in Ontario. Current versions of these documents are available on the College’s website at www.cpsso.on.ca, under the heading “Policies & Publications.”

4. Committee's Analysis

The Committee considered the report of the Medical Inspector, who opined as follows:

- There are deficiencies in Dr. Chacko's documentation, test result management, treatment of anxiety, depression and sleep disorders, and in opioid management. He also identified some ethical issues in Dr. Chacko's practice.
- He identified significant lack of knowledge, skill and judgement in Dr. Chacko's overall care and specifically in his narcotic management and prescribing.
- On the issue of narcotics prescribing, Dr. Chacko did not follow the 2010 Canadian Guideline for Safe and Effective Use of Opioids for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain. The issues included minimal documentation of the indications for narcotic therapy, excessive doses, opioids prescribed concurrently with benzodiazepines, no narcotic contracts, no ongoing pain assessments, and lack of use of NSAIDs and other modalities such as physiotherapy.
- Dr. Chacko prescribed significant amounts of narcotics to high-risk individuals without recognizing red flags (a patient history of substance abuse or diversion, frequent reports of lost or stolen medications, numerous requests for early renewals) or monitoring with periodic urine drug screening.
- Dr. Chacko's approval of patients for programs for which they did not qualify and prescribing of narcotics without regard for diversion or misuse raised ethical concerns.

The Committee also considered Dr. Chacko's response to the Medical Inspector's report, where Dr. Chacko described changes to his practice and education he has taken or will take to improve his narcotics prescribing and medical record-keeping.

As a result of this investigation, the Committee had concerns about Dr. Chacko's practice. The Committee noted that its concerns would be satisfied, in part, if an undertaking could be obtained from Dr. Chacko to address the issues in question. Such an undertaking was obtained; it is posted on the public register and remains there while it is in effect. The Committee is

satisfied that the terms of the undertaking (which include supervision, professional education and reassessment) are important measures to ensure that Dr. Chacko's ongoing and future narcotics prescribing is safe and effective for patients.

However, the Committee was concerned by the Medical Inspector's conclusions, including with regard to the standard of Dr. Chacko's overall medical care and documentation, particularly regarding narcotics. The Committee shared the Medical Inspector's perspective.

Therefore, in addition to accepting Dr. Chacko's undertaking, the Committee determined that it was also appropriate to require him to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned.