

SUMMARY

DR. REZA KAZEMI (CPSO# 99750)

1. Disposition

On March 8, 2017, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (“the Committee”) required general practitioner Dr. Kazemi to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to (a) his communications, (b) ethics, and (c) nutritional management of diabetes.

2. Introduction

A patient complained to the College that Dr. Kazemi refused to treat her unless she followed a plant-based diet, did not monitor her healing, and refused to send her for a second opinion.

Dr. Kazemi responded that he encouraged the patient to undergo a two-week trial of a plant-based diet, which she did voluntarily in February 2014 but which she chose not to continue. He saw the patient on an “as-needed” basis during her nearly three-year hospitalization. The patient’s care was being actively managed by 14 specialists during that time.

3. Committee Process

A General Panel of the Committee, consisting of public and physician members, met to review the relevant records and documents related to the complaint. 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.cpso.on.ca, under the heading “Policies & Publications.”

4. Committee’s Analysis

The Committee is highly concerned with Dr. Kazemi’s actions in this case: he advanced a plant-based diet and the patient felt that he used pressure tactics to persuade her to follow his preferred nutritional regimes.

Given the patient's poorly controlled diabetes, it was inappropriate to insist on a plant-based diet that was low in protein, as it has a significant impact on wound healing, particularly in this case where the patient had poorly controlled diabetes. The Committee is of the view that encouraging a plant-based diet put the patient at risk of harm.

The Committee also has concerns about Dr. Kazemi's communications with the patient about her diet and is of the view that ethical issues are raised when a physician promotes his personal views to patients.

The Committee noted that this is Dr. Kazemi's second complaint in which patients have complained about being pressured to follow special diets. In addition, the Committee also reviewed two parallel investigations at the same time as this one, and those cases also raised concerns about Dr. Kazemi pressuring patients into following a plant-based diet. This information has served to heighten the Committee's concern about the patient's claim that Dr. Kazemi was pressuring her to follow this diet.

As a result of a broader, parallel investigation into Dr. Kazemi's practice, the Committee has ordered educational remediation on his management of diabetes, amongst other topics. Had the Committee not ordered such education, it would have done so in this case.