

SUMMARY

DR. LJUDMILLA JEFREMOVA (CPSO# 78482)

1. Disposition

On November 15, 2017, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee) ordered family physician Dr. Jefremova to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to professional communications with other health care practitioners, patients and family, and professionalism, including her failure to respond appropriately and be available for critical events.

The Committee also ordered Dr. Jefremova to complete a specified continuing education and remediation program (SCERP). The SCERP requires Dr. Jefremova to:

- complete one-to-one communications coaching facilitated by the College. Upon completion, the instructor will submit a report to the College to determine if the one-to-one instruction has been completed satisfactorily; and
- review and reflect on the College's "The Practice Guide" and discuss with the instructor its applicability to her situation and how she has made, or plans to make, changes to her practice.

2. Introduction

The College received a complaint raising concerns about Dr. Jefremova's emergency practice and in particular the care she provided to two elderly burn patients. Subsequently, the Committee approved the Registrar's appointment of investigators to conduct a broad review of Dr. Jefremova's practice.

3. Committee Process

As part of this investigation, the Registrar appointed a Medical Inspector (the MI) to review a number of Dr. Jefremova's patient charts, interview Dr. Jefremova, and submit a written report.

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.cpso.on.ca, under the heading "Policies & Publications."

4. Committee's Analysis

The MI initially concluded that Dr. Jefremova did not meet the standard of care for emergency medicine in all but two cases. In an addendum, the MI altered their opinion and concluded the standard was met, but opined that Dr. Jefremova displayed poor judgement in her attempt to handle a personal crisis and manage two high acuity patients; however, the hospital shares a significant responsibility by not providing adequate backup coverage. Dr. Jefremova should have made efforts to contact colleagues for help.

Dr. Jefremova responded that the MI on the initial review only found two cases to be below standard. Those cases involved unusual circumstances. She agrees that she should have come in to the hospital to assess those patients in a more timely manner. She recognizes that she did not display the best professional judgement in not attending the hospital. Her judgement was impacted by the challenging personal circumstances. She agrees that she should have attempted to call a colleague, and if this event were to re-occur she would do so.

The Committee agreed with the MI's initial opinion, but did not agree with the addendum, and still expressed concern about the care Dr. Jefremova provided to the two burn patients. Specifically, the Committee was troubled that Dr. Jefremova failed to make any effort to

contact the Chief-of-Staff (or anyone else), and did not think this responsibility could fall on the hospital. The Committee also noted that even when Dr. Jefremova did eventually attend the ER, she did not complete an appropriate assessment. It was another physician who ensured the patients received appropriate care, including transfer to a tertiary care centre, where both patients had lengthy admissions. Though these patients survived, given their age and the nature of their burns, they were at high risk for complications and death, and Dr. Jefremova failed to appreciate the urgency of their conditions and respond appropriately. Given the concerns with the care Dr. Jefremova provided to these two patients, the Committee would have ordered education in burn management, among other things, had the Committee not ordered that education as a result of a parallel investigation considered at the same time as this one.

Aside from the care to these burn patients, the Committee did not have other concerns about Dr. Jefremova's clinical care. However, the Committee did have concerns about Dr. Jefremova's conduct, communications, and professionalism. Having reviewed the personnel and credentialing file and information from nurses, doctors and administrators at two hospitals where Dr. Jefremova works, there appeared to be a pattern of ongoing concerns with Dr. Jefremova's interactions and communications with patients and families. There were nine patient complaints, and a common theme of the complaints was that Dr. Jefremova was rude or dismissive toward the patient or the patient's family. Staff noted that at times Dr. Jefremova could be overly "blunt" with patients, and others raised concern that Dr. Jefremova may rush patient interactions. Colleagues noted difficulties reaching Dr. Jefremova at night and her lack of availability. It was this lack of an appropriate response when she was on call at night that placed the two burn patients at risk. Concerns were also raised about her attending late and/or not managing her time well.

For all the above reasons, the Committee was of the opinion that Dr. Jefremova required the remediation outlined above and to attend the College to be cautioned in person.