

SUMMARY

DR. PETER IAN COLLINS (CPSO# 52404)

1. Disposition

On July 25, 2018, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee) required forensic psychiatrist Dr. Collins to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned on the inappropriate and unprofessional use of social media.

2. Introduction

The College received information raising concerns about Dr. Collins' professionalism with respect to his communications through social media. Specifically, a member of the public sent the College the results of a "social media investigation" that he had conducted on Dr. Collins, including Facebook posts he believed were "outrageous, dangerous and outright repulsive."

Subsequently, the Committee approved the Registrar's appointment of investigators to investigate the matter.

Dr. Collins responded that he believed his posts were not publicly accessible, as he had the highest security settings possible on his Facebook page. He also described the context and background behind each post that had been forwarded to the College.

Dr. Collins further stated that he works with the police to assist them with investigating violent crimes, and that his job is stressful. He explained that he had developed various coping mechanisms for dealing with these difficult situations, including using dark humour.

Dr. Collins indicated that he reviewed the College's position statement on social media and deactivated his entire Facebook profile.

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

4. Committee's Analysis

The College noted that, in posting these pictures and comments on Facebook, Dr. Collins disregarded the expectations the College has of its members—outlined in several College publications—which include upholding the reputation of the profession and communicating effectively and with respect, sensitivity, and compassion.

Although Dr. Collins indicated that his comments were a form of "dark humour," the Committee noted that posts to social media can be misinterpreted. The Committee found the posts to be concerning and pointed out that Dr. Collins would have had no control over how others interpreted them.

The Committee noted that Dr. Collins' response suggested that he had taken the matter seriously, as he had undertaken a review of the College's position statement on social media and removed his Facebook profile. Nevertheless, the Committee was of the view that Dr. Collins' posts were inappropriate and unprofessional. Regardless of whether or not Dr. Collins believed that his posts were private, in the Committee's opinion, he exercised poor judgment that could have been damaging to his patients and the reputation of the medical profession.

In light of the above, the Committee required Dr. Collins to attend at the College to be cautioned on the inappropriate and unprofessional use of social media.