SUMMARY

DR. JABU MATHEW ABRAHAM (CPSO# 108184)

1. Disposition

On October 19, 2018, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee) required Dr. Abraham (Family Medicine) to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to narcotic prescribing in the management of a patient with patellar-femoral pain, and not following the 2010 *Canadian Guideline for Safe and Effective Use of Opioids for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain*.

2. Introduction

Family members of the late Patient lodged a complaint with the College that Dr. Abraham inappropriately prescribed large quantities of narcotics and controlled substances to the Patient, without the appropriate rationales to support the prescribing.

As part of its investigation, the College obtained an independent opinion (IO) from a provider who is a specialist in family medicine. The IO provider reviewed the entire written investigative record and submitted a written report to the Committee. The IO provider opined that Dr. Abraham did not meet the standard of care and he may pose a risk of harm or injury to his patients, and his lack of skill, judgement, and knowledge in terms of poor medical history, use of opioids for patella-femoral syndrome, and not adhering to the 2010 *Canadian Guideline for Safe and Effective Use of Opioids for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain* poses a major concern.

Dr. Abraham responded to the IO provider's report. He noted that his diagnosis of the Patient was based on a documented physical examination, the Patient's subjective complaints and previous assessment from an orthopaedic surgeon. He agreed that urine drug screens and treatment agreements can play a useful role in prescribing opioids, and he had registered for a Safe Opioid Prescribing Series course. The IO provider reviewed Dr. Abraham's response and

continued to hold the original opinion, noting other concerning aspects of Dr. Abraham's clinical approach in this case.

3. Committee Process

A Prescribing 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 accepted and shared the IO provider's concerns in this case. The Committee did note that Dr. Abraham was cooperative with the process in this investigation. During the course of the investigation, he signed an undertaking with the College in September 2017, which terms included: that his prescribing of narcotic preparations, benzodiazepines and other targeted substances, and other monitored drugs will be supervised by a Clinical Supervisor acceptable to the College; and that he shall not issue any prescription for narcotic drugs, narcotic preparations, benzodiazepines and other targeted substances and all other monitored drugs, without the prior review and authorization of the Clinical Supervisor. Dr. Abraham also described changes to his practice such that he was taking steps to follow the guidelines around opiate prescribing.

However, the manner in which Dr. Abraham managed the Patient's chronic, non-cancer pain in this case was very concerning in its deficiencies, for the reasons the IO provider set out.

It is a matter of public record that Dr. Abraham's College registration expired as he resigned from College membership as of July 30, 2018. The Committee noted, however, that the College

does retain jurisdiction over expired members for investigations into professional misconduct or incompetence that occurred when the individual was a College member. In this case, the care in question took place while Dr. Abraham was a College member. This was also one of three matters that the Committee considered simultaneously about Dr. Abraham.

The Committee is satisfied in this case that Dr. Abraham's resignation from the College provides sufficient assurance of public protection, taking into account the steps Dr. Abraham would have to go through if he ever wished to apply again for registration as a physician in Ontario. Further, the College disseminates information about resigned physicians to other regulatory bodies.

In light of the above, the Committee decided to require Dr. Abraham to attend at the College to be cautioned in person, as set out above.