

**SUMMARY of the Decision of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee  
(the Committee)**  
(Information is available about the complaints process [here](#) and about the Committee [here](#))

**Dr. John Paul Hopkins (CPSO #27922)  
(the Respondent)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Complainant contacted the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (the College) to express concerns about prescriptions the Respondent provided the Patient. Twice in 2019 and once in 2021, the Respondent prescribed flurazepam to the Patient without having met or assessed the Patient.

## **COMPLAINANT'S CONCERNS**

**The Complainant is concerned regarding the care provided to the Patient by the Respondent. Specifically, that the Respondent:**

- **has been prescribing flurazepam to the 89-year old Patient without ever having met her and never having assessed her.**

## **COMMITTEE'S DECISION**

The Committee considered this matter at its meeting of December 1, 2022. For the reasons set out below, the Committee requires the Respondent to appear before the Committee to be cautioned with respect to prescribing benzodiazepine to elderly individuals who he has no therapeutic relationship with and without documenting any kind of medical record or assessment.

## **COMMITTEE'S ANALYSIS**

As part of this investigation, the Committee retained an independent Assessor who specializes in family medicine. The Assessor opined that the Respondent did not meet the standard of practice of the profession and noted that the Respondent displayed a lack of knowledge, skill, and judgement by prescribing to the Patient in these circumstances. The Assessor also opined that the Respondent's behaviour of repeatedly prescribing flurazepam of significant amounts without clinical contact with the Patient, without documentation of his reasons for doing so, and without outreach to the Patient's family physician would be likely to expose his patients to harm or injury.

Records from the prescribing pharmacy for the Patient confirmed that prescriptions and a refill authorization request were made by the Respondent for the Patient in March

2019, November 2019, and March 2021. OHIP records indicate that the Respondent never billed for any services provided to the Patient from January 2018 to July 2021.

The Respondent confirmed that he had never met the Patient and that a family member had requested that he prescribe the flurazepam to the Patient.

The Respondent advised the Committee that he is now aware that when prescribing medication to a patient he should perform an appropriate clinical assessment, have a clinical indication for the prescription, and have records relating to the drug which he prescribes. He advised that he would do so in the future.

The Respondent failed to follow the guidelines set out in the College's policies, *Prescribing Drugs* and *Medical Records Documentation*. In particular, the Committee is of the view that when prescribing or renewing medications such as flurazepam, a benzodiazepine, it is imperative to have assessed the patient and documented both the reasoning for making the prescription and that a discussion of the risks of these medications has occurred with the patient. This is especially imperative with senior patients.

Given the very significant breach of the Respondent's standard of practice, the Committee determined that it was appropriate to caution the Respondent.