

**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. Robert Leslie Sleightholm (CPSO #51782)
(the Respondent)**

INTRODUCTION

The Complainant was scheduled to undergo a tummy tuck surgical procedure (abdominoplasty) by the Respondent. She paid in advance for the surgery and associated fees (a total of \$14,755.00). In mid-January, the Patient became ill (and was subsequently diagnosed with COVID-19 a few days later). She contacted the Respondent's office to cancel the surgery 10 days before the procedure was scheduled. The Patient later requested a refund from the Respondent, but her request was denied. The Complainant contacted the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (the College) to express concern about the Respondent's conduct.

COMMITTEE'S DECISION

The Committee considered this matter at its meeting of November 21, 2024. The Committee required the Respondent to appear before a Panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to failure to comply with his obligations under the College's policy, *Uninsured Services: Billing and Block Fees*, and, in particular, the failure to reimburse a patient fees for services not performed. The Committee also required the Respondent to prepare homework in advance of his caution with respect to review of his obligations under the policy, *Uninsured Services: Billing and Block Fees*, as well as his ethical obligations towards patients as outlined in the College's publication, *Essentials of Medical Professionalism*.

COMMITTEE'S ANALYSIS

Concern that the Respondent declined to refund the Complainant's money after she cancelled an abdominoplasty surgery scheduled due to illness

The Committee pointed out that the CPSO is not in a position to award money, provide reimbursement, or compel a physician to provide a refund to a patient.

The Committee has considered the complaint from the perspective of determining whether the Respondent's retention of the full amount paid by the Complainant to the Respondent complies with the CPSO policy on uninsured services. The Committee also considered this matter from an ethical perspective in relation to the Respondent's retention of the Patient's payment for services that were not provided.

The Committee relied on the CPSO policy on uninsured services, which states, in part, that physicians **must not** charge for services not performed. The Committee determined that this policy supersedes the Respondent's clinic policies with respect to refunds.

The policy on uninsured services also sets out that physicians must consider the patient's ability to pay when charging for uninsured services, including charging for appointments that are missed or cancelled. The Committee noted that although the Patient provided a doctor's note and an explanation for the cancellation, the Respondent still did not grant an exception to the Complainant's cancellation or the Complainant's explanation that she had saved up for years to afford the surgery and the money she paid represented her life savings.

The Committee also considered the Respondent's decision to retain the full amount of the fees paid by the Complainant to be unethical, and inconsistent with guidance provided in the CPSO's publication, *Essentials of Medical Professionalism*, especially with respect to the core value of practising with integrity.

Overall, the Respondent's actions in this case caused the Committee significant concern and for this reason the Committee determined that it would be beneficial to meet with the Respondent to discuss his failure to comply with the policy as well as his ethical shortcomings.