

**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. Ira Paul Bernstein (CPSO# 62382)
Family Medicine
(the Respondent)**

INTRODUCTION

The College received and/or became aware of the following information:

- A tweet that enclosed an article in which the Respondent, identifying himself as the co-founder of Canadian COVID Care Alliance (CCCA), announced a telehealth service (Canadian COVID Telehealth Inc. - CCTI) that will provide COVID-19 care and prescribe ivermectin for COVID-19.
- A letter from an individual who reported that the Respondent was advocating for the use of ivermectin and was inappropriately issuing COVID-19 vaccine exemptions out of his office and encouraging other physicians to do so as well.
- Several videos featuring interviews with the Respondent and an article referring to the Respondent prescribing ivermectin for COVID-19 to patients.

The Committee approved the Registrar's appointment of investigators to review the Respondent's care and conduct.

DISPOSITION

The Committee considered this matter at its meeting of August 8, 2023. The Committee required the Respondent to appear before a Panel of the Committee to be cautioned regarding the importance of maintaining public trust; following public health and College guidance; ensuring public communications, including social media communications, are appropriate; and ensuring his medical records systems meet the requirements set out in the College's policy, *Medical Records Management*.

The Committee also decided to accept an undertaking from the Respondent, that included practice restrictions and professional education.

COMMITTEE'S ANALYSIS

As part of the investigation, the Committee retained an independent assessor (Assessor), a specialist in family medicine, who reviewed the care related to COVID-19 the Respondent provided to number of patients. The Assessor found that the Respondent prescribed ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19 to patients and

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that he also provided COVID-19 vaccine exemption letters to patients who did not fulfill the Ontario Ministry of Health exemption eligibility criteria. The Assessor concluded that the Respondent did not meet the standard of practice of the profession, that he demonstrated a lack of knowledge, skills and judgment, and that his clinical practice was likely to expose his patients to harm due to the side effects of ivermectin, false reassurance of disease outcome for patients who were prescribed ivermectin or hydroxychloroquine, and potential for patients to have a higher risk of severe health outcome from COVID-19 due to inappropriate advice for COVID-19 vaccine exemption. The Committee accepted the Assessor's opinion in its entirety.

The Committee was concerned that the Respondent used his platform and authority as a physician in his public appearances and other means of communication to undermine public health positions and dissuade patients and the public from following the public health recommendations, including taking COVID-19 vaccines. The Respondent appeared on public media sites and on-line advocating for the use of ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine and disputing the approach of Public Health Canada, Ontario Public Health, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Ontario Science Table, and other guidance, which warned against the use of ivermectin for COVID-19 and supported masking and COVID-19 vaccination. The Respondent acknowledged his involvement with the CCCA and the establishment of the CCTI for the provision of COVID-related care, including prescribing ivermectin.

Additionally, the Respondent did not follow the College's policy, *Medical Records Management*, which outlines that physicians must only engage with EMR (electronic medical records) service providers who are willing and able to make medical records accessible, where required, for the purposes of regulatory processes (for example, College investigations and assessments).

The Committee was of the view that remediation and improvement are required to achieve the following educational goals:

- to respect the College's policies, public health guidance, and Ministry of Health directives during a declared pandemic – including through public statements and activities;
- to understand how health misinformation spreads, its impact on public health, and ways to combat it;
- to improve critical appraisal skills in public health evidence – while mindful of confirmation bias;
- to review the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 in the outpatient setting; and

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- to ensure medical records systems meet the requirements set out in the College's policy and legislation.

The Committee acknowledged the Respondent's cooperation in this investigation and his willingness to seek a resolution that involved remediation.

In light of the above, the Committee determined that it was appropriate to caution the Respondent and accept his undertaking, as outlined above.