

**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. Irene Polidoulis (CPSO# 55959)
(the Respondent)**

INTRODUCTION

The Complainant and the Respondent were physician colleagues at the same Family Health Organization (FHO). The Complainant contacted the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (the College) to express concerns about the Respondent's conduct.

COMPLAINANT'S CONCERNS

The Complainant is concerned that the Respondent, who is the lead physician of the FHO, has:

- **been in a long-term conflict of interest relationship by referring patients to her husband's pharmacy business;**
- **provided routine medical care to family members for several years;**
- **billed OHIP inappropriately for the routine care of her family members and particularly for house calls done on her family members;**
- **accessed the Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) of family members and others who are no longer her patients;**
- **prohibited other FHO physicians (i.e. the Complainant) and their lead staff from full functionality of the EMR by removing their system administrative privileges and security settings in order to ensure full access and full control of the medical charts of her relatives in the EMR and thereby jeopardized the integrity of the shared EMR database and has also compromised patient care on several occasions; and**
- **manipulated and destroyed evidence in order to cover up her guilt by making alterations to the medical charts of the relatives of the Respondent in the shared FHO EMR.**

COMMITTEE'S DECISION

A Family Practice Panel of the Committee initially considered this matter at its meeting on February 18, 2021 and the matter was returned to the Committee for clarification of the disposition on March 15, 2021. The Committee required the Respondent to appear before the Committee to be cautioned with respect to inappropriately treating family members, contrary to the College policy, *Physician Treatment of Self, Family Members, or Others Close to Them*.

COMMITTEE'S ANALYSIS

The Respondent admitted to providing ongoing routine care to several family members for at least 15 years and that she billed OHIP for providing this care, including for house calls. The Respondent acknowledged being aware of College policy since about 2002, and that providing care to these family members was contrary to policy, yet she continued to do so. The Respondent also accessed records of family members after she was no longer their treating physician.

The Respondent's actions in providing care to family members while knowing College policy prohibited this were troubling; this was not a question of the occasional prescription refill, and there was no doubt that these people were members of the Respondent's immediate family. In addition, in some instances the Respondent billed OHIP for the care provided. Given this, the Committee felt it appropriate to meet with her to discuss our concerns.

The Committee took no further action on the concern that the Respondent had been in a long-term conflict of interest relationship by referring patients to her husband's pharmacy business, because it was not established whether the Respondent always advises patients they may have prescriptions directed to the pharmacy of their choice or be provided with a paper copy of the prescription, or if as alleged the Respondent directs patients to a pharmacy owned by her husband.

The Committee also took no further action with the concerns that the Respondent removed the Complainant and her assistant's special user permissions for the FHO EMR and that the Respondent altered her relatives' medical charts. The Respondent stated that she removed these permissions from the Complainant and her assistant as they were not supposed to have them, in accordance with the FHO agreement. Additionally, there is no evidence that the Respondent manipulated or destroyed information contained in her relatives' charts and the Committee accepts the Respondent's explanation regarding the corrections made to the alerts in her relatives' charts.