

## **SUMMARY**

### **DR. ALLYSON ENID KOFFMAN (CPSO# 71137)**

#### **1. Disposition**

On December 19, 2018, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee) ordered family medicine specialist Dr. Koffman to complete a specified continuing education and remediation program (SCERP). The SCERP requires Dr. Koffman to attend and successfully complete the next available session of an approved course in boundaries and communication either through PROBE Canada or SAEGIS. The Committee also required Dr. Koffman to attend at the College to be cautioned in person with respect to her inadequate care of a patient at risk of substance abuse and drug seeking behavior, including her prescribing of opiates to the patient.

#### **2. Introduction**

The Patient complained to the College that Dr. Koffman engaged in boundary violations, in that Dr. Koffman was the Patient's friend and "drug dealer." Among other things, the Patient advised that Dr. Koffman had given him money and bought him clothes, and saw him for appointments longer than those of other patients.

Dr. Koffman responded that the Patient's allegations are false, do not accurately reflect the events or encounters described, and are contradicted by the medical record. Among other things, she advised that the Patient's conduct became more challenging, threatening (to her, staff and other physicians in the clinic) and disruptive, leading to his termination from the practice. She indicates that she made numerous referrals in order to obtain assistance/advice with respect to how best to manage the Patient, but that he refused to receive care from anyone else. She also states that the Patient stalked her (the Patient was charged with criminally harassing Dr. Koffman).

### **3. Committee Process**

A General 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](http://www.cpso.on.ca), under the heading "Policies & Publications." The Committee also considered a report from an independent opinion (IO) provider who is a family physician, commenting on Dr. Koffman's care in this case.

### **4. Committee's Analysis**

The IO provider retained by the College (who had occasion to review the patient chart as well as emails between the parties) opined that Dr. Koffman's care did not meet the standard of practice of the profession and that she displayed a lack of knowledge. The IO provider questioned the Patient's diagnosis, noted that there were "red flags" for substance abuse and drug seeking behaviour, and questioned the hours of psychotherapy provided to the Patient. In addition, the IO provider opined that Dr. Koffman displayed a lack of judgment in her treatment of the Patient, and there were many occasions over the years that she had the opportunity to terminate the doctor-patient relationship but did not, this exposing her colleagues and staff to potential harm or injury by not terminating the Patient sooner.

The Committee agreed with the IO provider's conclusions. While the Committee appreciated the complexity of the situation, it was nevertheless of the view that Dr. Koffman should have terminated the relationship sooner, given the numerous documented instances of concerning/threatening behaviour and "red flags." The Committee was also of the view that Dr. Koffman displayed a lack of knowledge through the absence of goals and agreed upon time lines in the provision of psychotherapy, and that she lacked sufficient insight to recognize her failure to maintain adequate boundaries (i.e. by engaging in email communications and prolonged psychotherapy sessions without clear clinical indications). In addition, the

Committee agreed with the IO provider that Dr. Koffman's prescribing was inappropriate, given the Patient's history of mental health and substance abuse issues and the risk of drug-seeking behaviour.

The Committee was further concerned by the Respondent's extensive history with the College, for issues similar to those raised in this case, and noted that despite this previous involvement with the College, she continued to display deficiencies in her practice, in this case with respect to her failure to maintain proper boundaries and her mismanagement of a patient at risk for drug seeking behaviour.

Given all of the above, the Committee required Dr. Koffman to attend at the College to be cautioned in person and to complete the education program outlined above.