

SUMMARY

DR. YUBO REN (CPSO# 81945)

1. Disposition

On May 2, 2018, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee) required family physician Dr. Ren to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to the inappropriate use and dispensing of hCG (human chorionic gonadotropin) for weight loss. The Committee also requested that Dr. Ren provide a written report on using and dispensing medications and preparations of hCG, particularly their off label use.

2. Introduction

The College received information raising concerns about Dr. Ren's weight loss clinic and subsequently, the Committee approved the Registrar's appointment of investigators to conduct a review of this aspect of Dr. Ren's practice.

3. Committee Process

As part of this investigation, the Registrar appointed a Medical Inspector to review a number of Dr. Ren's patient charts, interview Dr. Ren, and submit a written report to the Committee.

A General Panel of the Committee, consisting of public and physician members, met to review the relevant records and documents related to the investigation. 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, under the heading "Policies & Publications."

4. Committee's Analysis

The Committee notes there has been long-standing concern in the profession regarding the use of hCG in the weight loss context, as evidenced by professional advisories dating back to the 1970s, and leading to regulatory changes in the 1980s.

Further, a January 2017 Health Canada bulletin expresses continuing concerns regarding the use of hCG to treat obesity. Indeed, Health Canada notes that it is not aware of any substantial scientific evidence that hCG is effective for weight loss, that it redistributes fat, or that it reduces appetite or the hunger and discomfort that can be associated with calorie-restricted diets. Health Canada also notes several risks associated with hCG use.

The Medical Inspector opined that Dr. Ren did not meet the standard of practice in all 18 charts reviewed, as he consistently prescribed medication with no scientific evidence of benefit and the potential to cause harm. The Medical Inspector also concluded that Dr. Ren displayed a lack of knowledge and judgement in his prescribing of hCG but did not demonstrate a lack of knowledge with regard to weight loss management in general, and that his use of hCG posed a risk of harm to his patients.

Dr. Ren has advised the College that now he is aware of the concerns regarding hCG and relevant regulations, he has ceased the use, preparation, and dispensing of hCG for weight loss, as of September 28, 2016.

Though Dr. Ren has stopped using hCG to treat obesity, given the Medical Inspector's report and the information in this investigation, the Committee had concerns about Dr. Ren's decision to use hCG to treat obesity, given the lack of evidence of any benefit and the potential harm to patients, and will caution him accordingly.