

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 for weight loss, failing to maintain appropriate infection control practices, and failing to comply with the Advertising Regulation (that is, Part II of Ontario Regulation 114/94 under the *Medicine Act*, 1991).

2. Introduction

The complainant expressed concerns to the College about Dr. Ren's weight loss clinic, including that Dr. Ren: uses human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) in a weight loss program, when it was banned by the College in 1988; pre-fills syringes to provide to patients to self-administer; dispenses medications for a profit; and advertises on the clinic website contrary to the Advertising Regulation. During the investigation, which involved an inspection of Dr. Ren's clinic conducted by the College and Public Health, various deficiencies were identified in his infection prevention and control (IPAC) practices.

Dr. Ren responded that he was unaware of the concerns related to the use of hCG for weight loss, and now that he is aware of them he has stopped using hCG as of September 2016. He has corrected any IPAC issues identified in his office practice.

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, under the heading "Policies & Publications."

4. Committee's Analysis

Regarding hCG to treat obesity

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.

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, 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.

Regarding IPAC practices

College investigators and Public Health completed a joint inspection of the clinic. There were numerous deficiencies in the clinic's IPAC practices, including those where there was a high risk

of infection as a result. Public Health also found that the way in which hCG was prepared and dispensed in syringes was unacceptable and increased the infection risk. As per Public Health and the standards for compounding, preparation of these medications should not be done in an office setting, but in a pharmacy.

Though Dr. Ren has corrected any issues identified, given the deficiencies identified, the Committee determined it was appropriate to caution Dr. Ren with respect to his IPAC practices.

Regarding dispensing medications for profit

The Committee is satisfied that Dr. Ren's billing practices for the medications dispensed and for the weight loss program were reasonable and appropriate.

Regarding information on the clinic website that does not comply with the Advertising Regulation

The Committee's review of the clinic website from May 2016 revealed that it contained material that did not comply with the Advertising Regulation. For example, there were false, misleading, and/or superlative statements regarding the benefits of hCG for weight loss or with respect to the rate and amount of weight loss expected, such as "hCG weight loss program is the best option" and patients will lose "0.5-1 pound each day without the worry of regaining it later." There were also patient testimonials with before/after pictures in various video links.

Though Dr. Ren has now appropriately made changes to the clinic website to comply with the Advertising Regulation, he should have been in compliance with it before the investigation, and the Committee will caution him accordingly.