

SUMMARY

DR. MOHAMED ASADIG ABOUNAJA (CPSO# 89997)

1. Disposition

On February 15, 2018, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee) required family medicine physician Dr. Abounaja to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to his use of inappropriate or unindicated nerve blocks.

The Committee also ordered Dr. Abounaja to complete a specified continuing education and remediation program (SCERP). The SCERP requires Dr. Abounaja to:

- Practise under the guidance of a Clinical Supervisor acceptable to the College for six (6) months, with meetings biweekly for the first four weeks, and monthly for the remainder of the term
- Engage in self-directed learning by reviewing pages 7-14 of the CPSO document “Expectations of Physicians who have Changed their Scope of Practice to Interventional Pain Management”
- Undergo a reassessment of his practice by an assessor selected by the College approximately six (6) months after the completion of the program.

2. Introduction

The College received information raising concerns about Dr. Abounaja’s use of nerve blocks in patients and subsequently, the Committee approved the Registrar’s appointment of investigators to conduct a broad review of Dr. Abounaja’s practice.

Dr. Abounaja responded that he felt that all the nerve blocks he performed were clinically indicated by issues in the patients’ lower extremities and that his management of pain was appropriate.

3. Committee Process

As part of this investigation, the Registrar appointed a Medical Inspector to review a number of Dr. Abounaja's patient charts and submit a written report to the Committee. The Medical Inspector also provided a second report, after reviewing further charts and directly observing Dr. Abounaja's practice.

A Family Practice 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 was very concerned by the Medical Investigator's first report, which indicated that Dr. Abounaja performed sciatic blocks in six patients who did not require them. After this report, the Committee considered referring Dr. Abounaja to the attention of the Discipline Committee. The Medical Inspector's second report regarding additional patients indicated that Dr. Abounaja performed only one unindicated block which alleviated some of the Committee's concerns.

The Committee noted that Dr. Abounaja performs an extremely large number of nerve blocks in his practice, which further concerned the Committee that he may be performing unindicated nerve blocks.

The Committee found no issues with Dr. Abounaja's technical skill in performing nerve blocks, but took issue with the fact that he performed blocks when such treatment was not clinically indicated. This was very concerning, given that nerve blocks do carry serious risks. Further, Dr.

Abounaja has a significant history of complaints with the College, including in regards to his communication and record-keeping, and showed little insight in this case regarding his decision to administer frequent nerve blocks.

The Committee therefore determined that Dr. Abounaja's use of inappropriate or unindicated nerve blocks merited a caution and that a period of clinical supervision followed by a reassessment was also necessary in order to review Dr. Abounaja's patient care and charts.