

## **PUBLIC SUMMARY**

### **DR. NURI ISSA MOHAMED BELKASIM KAAL (CPSO# 65656)**

#### 1. Disposition

On December 9, 2015, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (“the Committee”) ordered internal medicine specialist Dr. Kaal to complete a specified continuing education and remediation program (“SCERP”). The SCERP requires Dr. Kaal to:

- Complete Individualized Instruction/Coaching in communications, to be facilitated by the College, focused on breaking bad news to patients and families and ensuring compassionate and empathetic communications at all times, with a report back to the College from the instructor.
- Introduction

A family member of the patient complained to the College that Dr. Kaal was unprofessional, lacked empathy and compassion, and was impatient, rude, arrogant, insulting and condescending with the patient and the patient’s family during a hospitalization where investigations revealed a diagnosis of a widespread metastatic disease. According to the patient’s family member, Dr. Kaal disclosed the diagnosis in less than three minutes, and when the family had further questions the next day, he rudely and arrogantly cut them off. The family member contends that, among other things, Dr. Kaal became argumentative and upset during a discussion about whether another specialty would see the patient, and he told the patient, “good luck, it doesn’t look good,” when the patient said he was going to fight the disease.

Dr. Kaal provided his account of his interaction with the patient and the family, including that he informed them of a devastating diagnosis and discussed various aspects of the treatment plan (some of which family members disagreed with) and sought to answer their questions. He said he tried his best to arrange for prompt consultations. He disputed other details in the letter of complaint. He denied making certain comments attributed to him, and stated that it would not be in his practice to behave in the manner described. He said he is sorry his empathy did not come through during this difficult time.

- Committee Process

An Internal Medicine Panel of the Committee, consisting of public and physician members, met to review the relevant records and documents related to the complaint, as well as College policies and relevant legislation.

- Committee's Analysis

A witness who was present during one of the family's interactions with Dr. Kaal supported the recollection of the patient's family member, in that the witness said that Dr. Kaal's manner was impersonal and "even insensitive." The Committee was especially concerned about these accounts of Dr. Kaal's manner, given the family in this case was dealing with devastating news about the patient's condition. The College's policy on *Physician Behaviour in the Professional Environment* (#4-07) provides that: "The physician's primary responsibility is to act in the best interests of the individual patient. This includes acting respectfully toward patients and their families, friends and visitors, even under stressful situations."

The Committee was also aware that other patients had raised concerns about Dr. Kaal's communication style in the past and is troubled by Dr. Kaal's communication with patients and what appears to be a sustained pattern of issues related to unprofessional behaviour.

The Committee was of the view that Dr. Kaal would benefit from a specified continuing education or remediation program in communication.