

SUMMARY

DR. PETER BLECHER (CPSO# 65374)

1. Disposition

On February 8, 2017, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (“the Committee”) required general practitioner Dr. Blecher to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to his record-keeping and the standard of practice (including that he ensures he completes and documents an adequate assessment and medical history, considers the most serious causes of headaches and ensures his diagnosis fits with the patient’s history and symptoms, provides and documents discharge instructions given to the patient, and ensures appropriate follow-up).

2. Introduction

A family member of the patient complained to the College that Dr. Blecher failed to provide adequate care to the patient at a one-time Emergency Room (ER) visit. Specifically, Dr. Blecher failed to perform a complete and thorough neurological assessment given the patient’s symptoms of sudden-onset headache, copious vomiting and severe neck pain; missed the diagnosis of a subarachnoid haemorrhage (SAH) (an uncommon stroke caused by a bleed in the brain); failed to perform diagnostic testing to confirm a diagnosis; and discharged the patient home while still vomiting.

3. Committee Process

As part of this investigation, the Committee retained an Independent Opinion provider (“IO provider”) who specializes in Emergency and Family Medicine. The IO provider reviewed the entire written investigative record and submitted 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 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.cpsso.on.ca, under the heading "Policies & Publications."

4. Committee's Analysis

The IO provider opined that Dr. Blecher did not meet the standard of practice. In particular, the IO provider noted Dr. Blecher's assessment was inadequate. Dr. Blecher took an incomplete history of the patient's symptoms. His physical examination also lacked details, and there was nothing to show that he considered the most serious causes of headaches. Dr. Blecher did not give the patient discharge instructions or arrange appropriate follow-up.

The IO provider also concluded that Dr. Blecher displayed a lack of skill by failing to complete and document a detailed examination, as well as a lack of judgment by sending the patient home without conducting a more thorough assessment. Dr. Blecher may expose his patients to harm if this case is reflective of his assessments in the ER.

The Committee agrees with the IO provider's conclusions. Dr. Blecher failed to complete and/or document a thorough neurological examination (including pertinent positive and negative findings) and medical history, and as a result, did not diagnose a SAH. Dr. Blecher also failed to order an urgent CT scan, and instead discharged the patient home without having documented appropriate instructions or ensuring appropriate follow-up.

The Committee was also of the view that Dr. Blecher's notes were overly brief and mostly illegible. As the College's *Medical Records* policy provides, thorough and legible notes are a crucial component of good medical care, and are an important measure of the quality of care received by a patient. The medical record is also an essential part of a patient's continuity of care between different health care providers. Further, if a physician's treatment of a patient is called into question, as it is here, the best point of reference is a comprehensive and legible record.

Dr. Blecher's history with the College, which includes concerns raised regarding the legibility of his notes, and care and communications in the ER, further heightened the Committee's concerns.

As a result of two parallel investigations considered at the same time, Dr. Blecher also signed an undertaking, in which he will undergo clinical supervision for six months, which will include periodic meetings and chart reviews by the supervisor, homework on medical records, and a reassessment.