

SUMMARY of the Decision of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee)

(Information is available about the complaints process [here](#) and about the Committee [here](#))

**Dr. Thomas Baitz (CPSO #20774)
(the Respondent)**

INTRODUCTION

The Complainant's family physician referred her to the Respondent. The Complainant saw the Respondent in 2018 and 2019 regarding her high blood pressure (hypertension) and irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia). The Complainant contacted the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (the College) to express concerns about the Respondent's care and conduct.

COMPLAINANT'S CONCERNS

The Complainant is concerned regarding the Respondent's conduct and care during office visits in October 2018 and January 2019. Specifically, the Complainant is concerned that the Respondent:

- **did not adequately investigate her heart rhythm prior to prescribing amiodarone;**
- **did not listen to her concerns regarding side effects of amiodarone that she was experiencing; and**
- **was unprofessional, inappropriate, and dismissive when she tried to speak with him regarding the medications and side effects.**

COMMITTEE'S DECISION

An Internal Medicine Panel of the Committee considered this matter at its meeting of January 13, 2020. The Committee required the Respondent to attend at the College to be cautioned in person with respect to the management of a patient with stable symptomatic supraventricular tachycardia (SVT). The Committee also directed staff to negotiate an undertaking with the Respondent.

COMMITTEE'S ANALYSIS

As part of this investigation, the Committee retained an independent Assessor who specializes in internal medicine. The Assessor opined that the Respondent's care of the Complainant did not meet the standard, that the Respondent's care displayed a lack of skill, knowledge, or judgment, and that the Respondent's clinical practice, behaviour or conduct exposes or is likely to expose his patients to harm or injury.

Concern that the Respondent did not adequately investigate the Complainant's heart rhythm prior to prescribing amiodarone

- In the Committee's view, amiodarone as a first line treatment for mildly symptomatic SVT in a patient in her 50s was inappropriate. There were safer and more appropriate options for SVT management, including monitoring symptoms, and if a threshold was reached (mainly as determined by the Complainant), considering treatment; medication (other than amiodarone); or an ablation strategy.
- The Committee notes that a patient's preferences, including consideration of the impact of the symptoms on the patient's quality of life, are critically important with respect to the management of stable SVT. As such, it was important for the Respondent to review all the above options with the Complainant and determine how she wanted to proceed, which he failed to do.

Concern that the Respondent was unprofessional, inappropriate, and dismissive when the Complainant tried to speak with him regarding the medications and side effects

- The Committee was struck by the Complainant's very negative perception of the encounter. We are also cognizant of the fact that the Respondent has a history of previous complaints to the College raising similar issues about his professionalism.
- The Assessor noted that the Complainant's report of the communication and encounters and the Respondent's sense of the communication were widely discordant. The Assessor was concerned that the Respondent failed to "read" the emotional needs of the Complainant at the time of assessment, and that these deficiencies in communication with the Complainant unnecessarily magnified her concerns, anxieties and ultimately the decision-making in her care. The Committee shares the Assessor's concerns about the quality of the Respondent's communications in this case.

The Committee noted that its concerns would be satisfied if an undertaking could be obtained from the Respondent to address the issues in question, and if the Respondent also attended the College to be cautioned in person. The Committee took no action on the concern that the Respondent did not listen to the Complainant's concerns regarding side effects of amiodarone that she was experiencing.