

## Summary of Settlement Agreement

**Dr. George S. Richardson**

**Halifax, Nova Scotia**

By decision dated DEC. 7, 2011, the Hearing Committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Province of Nova Scotia (the "College") accepted a Settlement Agreement advanced by the College and Dr. Richardson, and recommended by Investigation Committee "C" of the College pursuant to section 57 of the *Medical Act*.

The Settlement Agreement contained agreed facts, the allegations against Dr. Richardson, the admissions of Dr. Richardson, and the agreed disposition.

### **Agreed Facts**

Dr. Richardson obtained his medical degree in 1988. He developed a general practice which he moved to the Parkland Medical Clinic in 2005, where he had a case load of approximately 3,500 patients.

In 2009, Dr. Richardson was approached by a colleague in his practice about his failure to maintain his charts and the number of accumulating unchecked lab reports.

Dr. Richardson left his practice abruptly on December 27, 2009. Dr. Richardson did not inform anyone he was leaving. His sudden departure left most of his patients without a doctor and left many charts and other administrative aspects of his practice incomplete. The Parkland Medical Clinic received a number of complaints regarding Dr. Richardson's departure.

In February, 2010, a complaint was received by the College from the Prescription Monitoring Program regarding certain prescriptions written by Dr. Richardson which appeared to have been written after Dr. Richardson left his practice.

In the course of investigating the matter, it was learned that Dr. Richardson had a valid licence at the time the prescriptions were written, but the nature and number of the prescriptions caused the College to conduct a further investigation. During the course of the investigation Dr. Richardson admitted to a long standing substance abuse problem for more than 20 years, involving both alcohol and drugs. By April, 2007, Dr. Richardson was engaging in daily use. While he received treatment in January, 2008, he resumed use within six (6) months of the completion of the treatment program.

Dr. Richardson moved to New Zealand in early 2010, and sought a licence to practice medicine in that country. As part of the application process he was required to disclose prior history of drug use. Dr. Richardson gave false information to his assessors in New Zealand suggesting that he had ceased his use of drugs three (3) years earlier, when that was not true. Dr. Richardson also continued to use some non-prescribed drugs while in New Zealand.

Dr. Richardson was denied a licence to practice medicine in New Zealand.

In Dr. Richardson's written response to the College respecting the complaint, Dr. Richardson provided false information, indicating that he had been cleared to practice medicine in New Zealand and that he had been in recovery for more than two (2) years.

The Investigation Committee of the College requested independent addiction and psychiatric assessments of Dr. Richardson. During these assessments, Dr. Richardson provided different information to the assessors from that previously provided to the College.

In September, 2010 Dr. Richardson met with the Investigation Committee and again provided false information to the Committee respecting his prescription of medications for patients and respecting his addiction.

In the course of the investigation of the complaint the College interviewed a patient of Dr. Richardson's who provided information of concern to the College. Among other things, the patient alleged that Dr. Richardson self-administered drugs in his presence. The patient also advised the College that Dr. Richardson, while under the influence of alcohol and drugs made disparaging and unprofessional remarks about professionals, colleagues and patients and discussed confidential information regarding patient care. The Investigation Committee of the College met with Dr. Richardson on December 8, 2010 to review the information received from this patient. During this interview, Dr. Richardson denied the allegations brought forward by the patient.

Two days after this meeting with the Investigation Committee, Dr. Richardson requested an urgent meeting with the Committee to review what he had told them. During his meeting with the Committee on December 10, 2010, he retracted much of the information he had provided during his December 8, 2010 meeting, admitted many of the allegations brought forward by the patient and apologized to the Investigation Committee.

In the latter part of 2010 Dr. Richardson began seeing a number of treatment providers, and continues to do so. He reports that he continues in recovery. He also is pursuing ongoing continuing medical education.

#### **Allegations Against Dr. Richardson**

The following allegations were referred to the Hearing Committee of the College (note that two of the allegations are subject to a publication ban):

- a. Dr. Richardson prescribed large quantities of narcotics to certain patients and issued post dated prescriptions to certain patients prior to leaving his practice;
- b. ***Redacted due to publication ban;***
- c. Dr. Richardson failed to document and keep records of patient interactions and of prescriptions after he left his practice;
- d. Dr. Richardson failed to take adequate actions to inform patients and colleagues upon the closing of his practice and he failed to provide reasonable transfer care for his patients;

- e. Dr. Richardson is, or has been, addicted to, dependant on, or abusing drugs and Alcohol;
- f. ***Redacted due to publication ban;***
- g. Dr. Richardson self-administered drugs in the presence of a patient;
- h. Dr. Richardson made disparaging and unprofessional remarks about professionals, colleagues and patients to one or more patients while under the influence of drugs and alcohol;
- i. Dr. Richardson discussed confidential information regarding patient care with other patients and individuals while under the influence of drugs and alcohol; and
- j. Dr. Richardson misled the College's Investigative Committee.

#### **Admissions**

Dr. Richardson admits all of the allegations and agrees they constitute professional misconduct.

#### **Agreed Disposition**

Dr. Richardson and the College agree that Dr. Richardson's licence to practice medicine has been revoked effective February 15, 2011.

#### **Costs and Publication Ban**

Dr. Richardson agrees to pay costs in the amount of \$5,000 inclusive of HST as a contribution toward the College's costs for the conclusion of this matter, payable in the event that Dr. Richardson has his licence reinstated and returns to the practice of medicine.

The Settlement Agreement approved by the Hearing Committee is subject to a publication ban. The information disclosed in this Summary is not subject to a publication ban.