

SUMMARY OF DECISION INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE “A”

Re: Dr. Karen Fewer

Investigation Committee “A” concluded its investigation into matters arising from a complaint respecting boundary violations with a patient. The following is a Summary of the Committee’s decision.

BACKGROUND

Dr. Karen Fewer is a family physician, licensed to practice medicine in Nova Scotia since 1996.

It was alleged that Dr. Fewer had developed a personal relationship with a patient, and despite transferring the care of this patient to another physician, she provided episodic care to the patient and prescribed medications for him. These prescriptions were not recorded in the patient’s medical record.

Dr. Fewer indicated that the prescriptions were provided when the patient’s family physician was not available. She admits the prescriptions were not documented in the patient’s medical record.

DECISION

Investigation Committee “A” recognizes the specific issues of small, rural communities where there may be fewer options to separate provision of health care and relationships. There may be instances because of staffing, when it would be unavoidable that Dr. Fewer provide urgent medical care to the patient. In those cases, any care provided should have been documented in the patient’s medical record.

The Committee determined that by using the patient as a confidante or person of support while still providing him with some medical services, Dr. Fewer violated the spirit of the Canadian Medical Association’s Code of Ethics, which provides that physicians must recognize and disclose conflicts of interest that arise in the course of their professional duties and take steps to resolve them in the best interest of patients.

The Committee determined that the matter should be resolved with a reprimand and conditions, and Dr. Fewer has agreed to the reprimand and conditions.

Dr. Fewer is reprimanded for failing to appropriately recognize and act upon a boundary violation, contrary to expected Standards of Practice and the Canadian Medical Association’s Code of Ethics.

Dr. Fewer is required to complete the course “Understanding Boundaries and Managing the Risks Inherent in the Physician-Patient Relationship”, offered at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western University.

In addition, Dr. Fewer was ordered to pay a contribution towards the College’s costs of the investigation.