

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF NOVA SCOTIA
SUMMARY OF DECISION OF INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE “B”
RE: DR. WILLIAM VITALE

Overview of Complaint

This matter was initiated by a complaint from a health professional involved in the treatment of a family member of Dr. Vitale. The complainant advised that Dr. Vitale prescribed medication to a family member while that family member was under the care of other health professionals.

Conclusions of Investigation Committee

Dr. Vitale readily admitted that he prescribed medication to a family member. He indicated that he was not aware of specific restrictions found in the College’s Policy on Treating Self and Family Members. He confirmed that he erred in issuing a prescription contrary to this policy. He has committed to abiding by College policies in the future.

The Committee directs the following:

1. Dr. Vitale is reprimanded for prescribing medications to a family member in a manner contrary to the College’s Policy on Treating Self and Family Members;
2. Dr. Vitale must complete at his cost the next available offering of the ProBE course (Professional/Problem Based Ethics) offered in Toronto through the Centre for Personalized Education for Physicians;
3. Dr. Vitale is required to thoroughly familiarize himself with the College’s Policy on Treating Self and Family Members.

The Committee concluded that the above disposition reflects an appropriate balancing of the various factors at play in this case. There were difficult personal factors involved in leading to Dr. Vitale’s actions, and other treating health professionals were unavailable at the required time. Dr. Vitale cooperated with the College’s process, admitted his error and agreed to future compliance with College policies. While these mitigating factors are relevant, they all underscore the rationale for the College’s Policy on Treating Self and Family Members. A clear boundary is established through this policy which is designed to allow for objective, professional, non-family physicians to prescribe appropriate interventions including medication. Disciplinary action was warranted to deter violations of this policy by Dr. Vitale and other physicians and to express disapproval of the violation in this case.

Dated at Halifax, Nova Scotia, this 14th day of May, 2015.

Dr. Keri McAdoo, Chair
Investigation Committee B