

Discipline Report

Physician permanently suspended from medical practice

Dr. Vincenzo Visconti, a family physician from Sherwood Park, can no longer practice medicine after his licence with the College was permanently cancelled.

Background

In 2011, College Council ordered Dr. Visconti to undergo regular peer reviews as a result of a number of findings of unbecoming conduct under the *Medical Profession Act*. In October of 2017, a Senior Medical Advisor from the College reported that the latest review of Dr. Visconti's practice revealed concerns with his opioid prescribing (at amounts that were drastically higher than other physicians and showed a trend of increasing over time instead of decreasing, as recommended by chronic pain guidelines).

The College also investigated complaints received against Dr. Visconti in 2015, in which he directed patients to only use a specific pharmacy to fill prescriptions. An investigation into issues with Dr. Visconti's billing practices was also conducted at this time.

As a result of the investigations into these ongoing concerns, Dr. Visconti's license was suspended indefinitely in April of 2018 under Section 65 of the *Health Professions Act*, which grants regulators the ability to suspend a physician's practice permit in the interest of public safety.

Rather than proceed to a formal disciplinary hearing, Dr. Visconti agreed to a formal resolution of the complaints in December 2018.

Terms of resolution

The terms of resolution, signed by both Dr. Visconti and the College's Complaints Director, includes the following conditions:

1. Visconti must return his practice permit to the College and unconditionally request the cancellation of his registration, effective immediately.
2. Visconti is responsible for the costs of the investigations into his practice, totaling \$21,641.09.

3. Visconti may not apply for reinstatement with the College, or for registration in any other jurisdiction, with any other professional regulatory authority governing the practice of medicine.
4. In response to any inquiry by a professional regulatory authority or on a Certificate of Standing, the College can disclose that Dr. Visconti has retired from medical practice by requesting the cancellation of his permit in Alberta. The College will further disclose the concerns surrounding Dr. Visconti, inclusive of circumstances involving him and the College.
5. The College can publish (to the public and to the profession) the terms of resolution and the summary of the findings from the investigations into Dr. Visconti's practice.

Commentary

The College does not discourage the prescribing of opioids when it is clinically appropriate, but we do expect good follow-up and overall care from physicians for patients receiving this treatment. When issues arise, the College wants to work with physicians whenever possible to address concerns and help them improve their practice. However, if all attempts at remediation are unsuccessful, the College will do what is necessary to ensure we're meeting our mandate to protect the public. Permanent revocation of a practice permit/license is used only as a last resort, when the College believes that a physician's practice represents a continuing risk to patients.