

DR. MAYER HOFFER (CPSO #30856)

1. Disposition

On June 3, 2015, the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (“the Committee”) required psychiatrist Dr. Hoffer to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to block fees, billing for uninsured services and taking confidential patient calls during patient appointments.

2. Introduction

The College received a complaint from an anonymous patient that Dr. Hoffer charges patients a fee of \$75 for every appointment and \$25 for prescriptions he calls or faxes to pharmacies, and interrupts therapy sessions to take calls from other patients. The patient reported being charged by Dr. Hoffer on a monthly basis despite never making use of any uninsured services.

The Committee found the information brought to their attention by the anonymous patient to be very concerning, particularly in light of Dr. Hoffer’s history with the College. In April 2015, the Committee approved an appointment of investigators under the *Health Professions Procedural Code* to examine Dr. Hoffer’s practice.

In response to the investigation, Dr. Hoffer acknowledged that he charges the fees described by the patient and that he accepts brief calls, 30 to 60 seconds in duration, from patients during appointments. He noted that he does not leave the room during these conversations.

3. Committee Process

A panel of the Committee, consisting of public and physician members, met to review the relevant records and documents related to the complaint, the information gathered during the investigation, as well as College policies and the relevant legislation.

4. Committee’s Analysis

The Committee found that Dr. Hoffer was not in compliance with College policy #3-10, *Block Fees and Uninsured Services*. The Committee found that Dr. Hoffer’s fees for uninsured services are excessive. Furthermore, a letter he provided to patients did not list individual charges for

uninsured services or indicate that patients had the option of paying only for the services they accessed or that patients have the option to pay for individual services as they arise.

The Committee noted that in August 2010, the College received a patient complaint against Dr. Hoffer involving inappropriate billing for uninsured services and inappropriate behaviour, specifically interrupting therapy sessions to talk on the telephone. At that time, the Committee counseled Dr. Hoffer to comply with the College's block fee policy, and to take calls during sessions in a professional manner and only when necessary.

It was concerning to the Committee that Dr. Hoffer interrupts patient appointments to take non-urgent calls and does not leave the room during these calls to maintain patient confidentiality. The Committee noted that Dr. Hoffer engaged in this conduct despite being counseled in August 2010 for similar complaints. Given these reasons, the Committee decided to caution Dr. Hoffer in person.