



CONDUCT COUNTS!

PATIENT PROCEDURES, PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS & PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

SCENARIO

Julia had been a Respiratory Therapist (RT) for the past 20 years and employed at Sunshine Hospital since entering the RT profession. Julia was passionately dedicated to her job and enjoyed providing patient care to the people of Ontario. Colleagues and patients often complimented Julia on her RT abilities and always enjoyed her company.

Sometimes, Julia had outbursts with colleagues over processes and procedures stating that it slowed medical procedures down and impeded her ability to act quickly. Julia's outbursts were often in the hallways of the hospital within earshot of patients, colleagues, and senior staff. Moreover, Julia had made inappropriate comments about a patient to a colleague just outside the patient's room. The colleague expressed concern to their supervisor.

As a result, the Hospital conducted an investigation and determined that Julia contravened the Hospital's "Respectful Behaviour in the Workplace" policy, and that Julia was required by the Hospital to engage in remedial reflection and practice by completing the Facility's "Respect in the Workplace", "Managing Anger", "Managing Stress" and "Patient Sensitivity" courses. The Member completed these courses.

RESULTS

The CRTO received a report from the Hospital stating that the Member received a ten-day suspension for inappropriate and aggressive interactions with their supervisor and made inappropriate comments about a patient to a colleague. A Panel of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee conducted an investigation into the Member's conduct and actions.

In determining whether there was information to support the alleged conduct and actions of the Member, the Panel relied upon statements from witnesses, Facility staff, and the Member. In addition, the Panel relied on documentation requested from the Hospital, such as copies of their policies and procedures. The Panel acknowledged that the Member was remorseful, however they were concerned with the lack of judgement and discretion showed by the Member. Furthermore, the Panel was concerned that the Member had a similar prior history with the CRTO and that this was demonstrative of a pattern of behaviour.

The Panel ordered that the Member complete a Specified Continued Education and Remediation Program (SCERP) related to professional relationships and professional responsibilities. In addition, that Julia enters into an Acknowledgement and Undertaking (the "Agreement") with the CRTO, wherein the Member agrees to refrain from engaging in conduct that may be perceived as offensive, intimidating, harassing, and inappropriate or in any way could reasonably be seen to be a breach of CRTO standards regarding professional responsibilities, relationships and patient care and privacy.



PROFESSIONALISM

"Professionalism" or professional conduct is a term often used to describe the behaviours that are expected of individuals who hold a certain role in society. A "professional" is typically someone who has obtained skills that are recognized as requiring specific, intensive training and who applies those skills in a position impacting others (e.g., engineer, lawyer, RT, PT, MD, etc.). Professionals are often held to moral, ethical and legal standards because of this potential impact.



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EXPECTATION

The panel of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee was of the opinion that the Member's conduct contravened the Standards of Practice including:

Standard 10: Patient / Client Assessment & Therapeutic Procedures

- a. Treat all patients/clients with sensitivity and compassion, considering their unique needs and goals when providing care.

Standard 11: Privacy / Confidentiality

- c. Take precautions to ensure that conversations and sharing of information via other mediums (e.g., social media, audiovisual recordings) regarding patients/clients are not accessible to others and that patient/client information is not shared with those who are not directly involved in their care)

Standard 12: Professional Boundaries / Therapeutic & Professional Relationships

- c. Must not make comments, enter into situations, and/or demonstrate behaviour that could be interpreted as abusive, harassing, discriminatory, disrespectful or of a sexual nature (e.g., suggestive/provocative gestures) and must take action to prevent similar behaviour in others by reporting to the appropriate authority

Standard 13: Professional Responsibilities

Responsibilities to the CRTC

- b. Assume responsibility and accountability for their own actions and decisions
 - g. Must not contravene, or fail to maintain, a standard of practice of the profession or a published standard of the CRTC
- Responsibilities to the Profession and the Public*

- d. Demonstrate integrity, objectivity, and compassion in their relationships with patients/clients, healthcare team members, students, and others.

The Panel was seriously concerned about the conduct and actions demonstrated by the Member. Moreover, that this posed a risk to the profession of Respiratory Therapy and undermined the confidence that the public places in regulated healthcare professionals. The public expects Respiratory Therapists to display professionalism, integrity, and objectivity while carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Displaying altercations with colleagues and a lack of sensitivity towards patients negatively impacts how patients and their families perceive Respiratory Therapists.

Furthermore, the Panel was hopeful that by entering into an Agreement with the CRTC the Member would recognize the seriousness of their conduct and actions, commit to carrying out their role and responsibilities in accordance with the CRTC's expectations, and that failure to fulfill the Agreement could constitute an act of professional misconduct.

BOTTOM LINE

Regulated healthcare professionals have a responsibility and obligation to act with professionalism, integrity, and in the interest of their patients

RESOURCES

[CRTC Standards of Practice](#)