



Department of Health

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

June 8, 2017

CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Donald C. Edwards, M.D.
609 Montrose Street
Clermont, Florida 34711

Ian Silverman, Esq.
NYS Department of Health
Corning Tower Room 2512
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

RE: In the Matter of Donald C. Edwards, M.D.

Dear Parties:

Enclosed please find the Determination and Order (No. 17-163) of the Hearing Committee in the above referenced matter. This Determination and Order shall be deemed effective upon the receipt or seven (7) days after mailing by certified mail as per the provisions of §230, subdivision 10, paragraph (h) of the New York State Public Health Law.

Five days after receipt of this Order, you will be required to deliver to the Board of Professional Medical Conduct your license to practice medicine together with the registration certificate. Delivery shall be by either certified mail or in person to:

Office of Professional Medical Conduct
New York State Department of Health
Office of Professional Medical Conduct
Riverview Center
150 Broadway - Suite 355
Albany, New York 12204

If your license or registration certificate is lost, misplaced or its whereabouts is otherwise unknown, you shall submit an affidavit to that effect. If subsequently you locate the requested items, they must then be delivered to the Office of Professional Medical Conduct in the manner noted above.

As prescribed by the New York State Public Health Law §230, subdivision 10, paragraph (i), (McKinney Supp. 2015) and §230-c subdivisions 1 through 5, (McKinney Supp. 2015), "the determination of a committee on professional medical conduct may be reviewed by the Administrative Review Board for professional medical conduct." Either the licensee or the Department may seek a review of a committee determination.

Request for review of the Committee's determination by the Administrative Review Board stays penalties other than suspension or revocation until final determination by that Board. Summary orders are not stayed by Administrative Review Board reviews.

All notices of review must be served, by certified mail, upon the Administrative Review Board and the adverse party within fourteen (14) days of service and receipt of the enclosed Determination and Order.

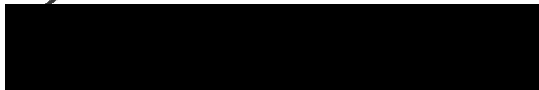
The notice of review served on the Administrative Review Board should be forwarded to:

James F. Horan, Esq., Chief Administrative Law Judge
New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Adjudication
Riverview Center
150 Broadway – Suite 510
Albany, New York 12204

The parties shall have 30 days from the notice of appeal in which to file their briefs to the Administrative Review Board. Six copies of all papers must also be sent to the attention of Mr. Horan at the above address and one copy to the other party. The stipulated record in this matter shall consist of the official hearing transcript(s) and all documents in evidence.

Parties will be notified by mail of the Administrative Review Board's Determination and Order.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, with a small line extending from the right side.

James F. Horan |
Chief Administrative Law Judge
Bureau of Adjudication

JFH: nm
Enclosure

**STATE OF NEW YORK : DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
STATE BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL CONDUCT**

© 17

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IN THE MATTER

OF

DONALD C. EDWARDS, M.D.

:
: DETERMINATION

:
: AND

:
: ORDER

:
: BPUC-17-163
-----X

A hearing was held on May 18, 2017, at the offices of the New York State Department of Health ("Department").¹ Pursuant to § 230(10)(e) of the Public Health Law ("PHL"), **KENDRICK A. SEARS, M.D.**, Chairperson, **DEBORAH WHITFIELD, M.A., Ph.D.** and **MICHAEL R. GOLDING, M.D.**, duly designated members of the State Board for Professional Medical Conduct, served as the Hearing Committee in this matter. **DAWN MacKILLOP-SOLLER, ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE ("ALJ")**, served as the Administrative Officer.

The Department appeared by Ian Silverman, Associate Counsel. A Notice of Referral Proceeding and Statement of Charges dated December 13, 2016, were served upon Donald C. Edwards, M.D. ("Respondent"), who did not appear at the hearing.² There were no witnesses at the hearing. The Hearing Committee received and examined documents from the Department and a stenographic reporter prepared a transcript of the proceeding. After consideration of the entire record, the Hearing Committee sustains the charge that the Respondent committed professional misconduct, in violation of Education Law ("Educ. Law") § 6530(9)(d). The Hearing Committee unanimously votes 3-0 to revoke the Respondent's license to practice medicine in New York.

¹ The location of the hearing was 150 Broadway, Suite 510, Menands, New York.

² Copies of the Notice of Referral Proceeding and Statement of Charges are attached to this Determination and Order as Appendix I. After several attempts at personal service at the Respondent's last known address in Clermont, Florida, which is also the same address registered with the New York State Education Department, the Petitioner sent the Notice of Hearing and Statement of Charges by certified mail, thereby establishing jurisdiction. [Exhibits 2, 4 and 5]. After considering this, the ALJ determined that the hearing on the merits could continue, despite the Respondent's absence.

BACKGROUND

The Department brought the case pursuant to PHL § 230(10)(p), which provides for an expedited hearing when a licensee is charged solely with a violation of Educ. Law § 6530(9). The Respondent is charged with professional misconduct pursuant to Educ. Law § 6530(9)(d), "having (his) license to practice medicine revoked, suspended or having other disciplinary action taken..." where the conduct resulting in such disciplinary action taken against his license to practice medicine would, if committed in the state of New York, constitute professional misconduct under the laws of the state of New York.

This case is based on the Final Order of the Florida Board of Medicine ("Florida Board") dated August 17, 2015, finding the Respondent guilty of professional misconduct resulting from his prescription practices, which included controlled substances he prescribed patients in excessive dosage amounts and without clinical justification. The Florida Board found that in issuing such prescriptions, the Respondent failed to document and perform physical evaluations, histories and drug monitoring. The Department charges that had the Respondent's conduct occurred in New York, it would have constituted practicing the profession with negligence on more than one occasion, gross negligence on a particular occasion, incompetence on more than one occasion, gross incompetence, conduct in the practice of medicine which evidences moral unfitness to practice medicine and failing to maintain a record for each patient which accurately reflects the evaluation of the patient, as defined in Educ. Law §§ 6530(3), 6530(4), 6530(5), 6530(6), 6530(20) and 6530(32), respectively.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Findings of Fact were made by the Hearing Committee after a review of the record in this matter. Under PHL § 230(10), the Department had the burden of proving its case by a preponderance

of the evidence. The references in brackets refer to exhibits ["Ex."]. The following findings and conclusions are the unanimous determinations of the Hearing Committee:

1. Donald C. Edwards, M.D., the Respondent, was licensed to practice medicine in New York on October 24, 1980, by the issuance of license number 143887 by the Education Department. [Ex. 3].

2. In an Order of Emergency Restriction of License dated May 27, 2015, and pending the formal discipline of the Respondent's medical license, the Florida Board restricted the Respondent from prescribing schedule II, III, IV and V controlled substances. The Florida Board's determination was based on the Respondent's prescriptions for such drugs to chronic pain patients at a medical office in Orlando, Florida, between 2008 and 2015, in high dosage amounts and without providing medical rationales for prescribing the drugs. [Ex. 6].

3. In a Final Order dated August 17, 2015, the Florida Board found the Respondent guilty of professional misconduct resulting from his prescription practices. As part of the Order, the Respondent agreed to the voluntarily relinquishment of his state of Florida medical license and to never again reapply for a medical license in that state. [Ex. 6].

VOTE OF THE HEARING COMMITTEE

FIRST SPECIFICATION

The Hearing Committee concluded that the evidence supports sustaining the charge of having committed misconduct as defined in Educ. Law § 6530(9)(d).

VOTE: Sustained (3-0)

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Department presented evidence to show that the Respondent issued prescriptions to patients for dangerous quantities and combinations of controlled substances without performing

proper assessments or monitoring and absent confirming the medical necessity for the drugs. This included prescriptions the Respondent issued to one patient for excessively high dosages of Oxycodone, Xanax and Soma without clinical justification and despite the patient's history of substance abuse. In a different case, the Respondent issued prescriptions for high quantities of Oxycodone, Dilaudid, Soma, Methadone and Valium that led to life threatening consequences for the patient, including treatment at a hospital facility for overdose and diagnoses of drug abuse and "psychosis secondary to drug intoxication." [Ex. 6]. In two separate instances, the Respondent issued ongoing prescriptions for high dosages of Oxycodone, Hydromorphone, Lortab and other drugs to undercover investigators posing as patients who reported fictional injuries and minimal pain levels.

Like Florida, in cases where physicians prescribe controlled substances, New York requires physicians to perform and document physical examinations and assessments of patients and document the reasons for prescribing such drugs, which the Respondent failed to do. The Respondent's failures, had they occurred in New York, would have constituted a failure to maintain a record for each patient which accurately reflects the evaluation of the patient, conduct in the practice of medicine which evidences moral unfitness to practice medicine and practicing the profession with negligence on more than one occasion, gross negligence on a particular occasion, incompetence on more than one occasion and gross incompetence, as defined in Educ. Law §§ 6530(32), 6530(20), 6530(3), 6530(4), 6530(5) and 6530(6), respectively.

The Hearing Committee considered the full spectrum of penalties available by statute, including revocation, suspension and/or probation, censure and reprimand, and the imposition of monetary penalties and determined that the sustained specification indicates the Respondent's irresponsible conduct in issuing such prescriptions under troubling circumstances, such as when patients reported a recent suicide attempt, unauthorized drug use or alcohol intake, or a history of

taking Suboxone, a drug used to counteract drug addiction. The Hearing Committee considered the risk of severe harm caused by the Respondent's inappropriate prescriptions, which resulted in overdose and toxicity for one patient and drug dependence for others. As such, the Hearing Committee unanimously concluded that the evidence supports revocation of the Respondent's New York medical license.

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. The specification of professional misconduct, as set forth in the Statement of Charges, is **SUSTAINED;**

2. The Respondent's license to practice as a physician in the state of New York is hereby **REVOKED;**

3. This Determination and Order shall be effective upon service on the Respondent. Service shall be either by certified mail or upon the Respondent at his last known address and such service shall be effective upon receipt or seven days after mailing by certified mail, whichever is earlier, or by personal service and such service shall be effective upon receipt.

DATED: ^{Syracuse} Albany, New York
6-5, 2017


Kendrick A. Sears, M.D.
Chairperson

Deborah Whitfield, M.A., Ph.D.
Michael R. Golding, M.D.

TO: Donald C. Edwards, M.D.
609 Montrose Street
Clermont, Florida 34711

Ian Silverman, Esq.
Associate Counsel
Bureau of Professional Medical Conduct
Corning Tower Building – Room 2512
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

APPENDIX I

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
STATE BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL CONDUCT

IN THE MATTER
OF
DONALD C. EDWARDS, M.D.

NOTICE OF
REFERRAL
PROCEEDING

TO: DONALD C. EDWARDS, M.D.
609 MONTROSE STREET
CLERMONT, FL 34711

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT:

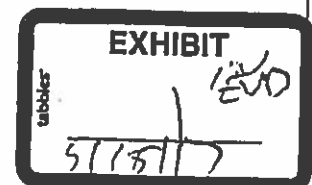
An adjudicatory proceeding will be held pursuant to the provisions of N.Y. Pub. Health Law §230(10)(p) and N.Y. State Admin. Proc. Act §§301-307 and 401. The proceeding will be conducted before a committee on professional conduct of the State Board for Professional Medical Conduct (Committee) on May 18, 2017, at 10:30 a.m., at the offices of the New York State Department of Health, Riverview Center, 150 Broadway, Suite 510, Menands (Albany), NY 12204-2719.¹

At the proceeding, evidence will be received concerning the allegations set forth in the Statement of Charges, which is attached. A stenographic record of the proceeding will be made and the witnesses at the proceeding will be sworn and examined.

You may appear in person at the proceeding and may be represented by counsel who shall be an attorney admitted to practice in New York state. You may produce evidence or sworn testimony on your behalf. Such evidence or sworn testimony shall be strictly limited to evidence and testimony relating to the nature and severity of the penalty to be imposed upon the licensee. Where the charges are based on the conviction of state law crimes in other jurisdictions, evidence may be offered which would show that the conviction would not be a crime in New York State. The Committee also may limit the number of witnesses whose testimony will be received, as well as the length of time any witness will be permitted to testify.

If you intend to present sworn testimony, the number of witnesses and an estimate of the time necessary for their direct examination must be submitted to the New York State

¹ For GPS purposes, enter "Menands", not "Albany".



Department of Health, Division of Legal Affairs, Bureau of Adjudication, Riverview Center, 150 Broadway - Suite 510, Albany, NY 12204-2719, ATTENTION: HON. JAMES HORAN, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF ADJUDICATION (Telephone: (518-402-0748), (henceforth "Bureau of Adjudication") as well as the Department of Health attorney indicated below, no later than twenty days prior to the scheduled date of the Referral Proceeding, as indicated above. Should the parties have objection to proposed witnesses or documentary evidence, the party raising the objection shall contact the Bureau of Adjudication to arrange for a pre-hearing conference with the Administrative Law Judge, prior to the hearing date.

Pursuant to the provisions of N.Y. Pub. Health Law §230(10)(p), you shall file a written answer to each of the charges and allegations in the Statement of Charges not later than ten days prior to the date of the hearing. Any charge or allegation not so answered shall be deemed admitted. You may wish to seek the advice of counsel prior to filing such answer. The answer shall be filed with the Bureau of Adjudication, at the address indicated above, and a copy shall be forwarded to the attorney for the Department of Health whose name appears below. You may file a written brief and affidavits with the Committee. Six copies of all papers you submit must be filed with the Bureau of Adjudication at the address indicated above, no later than fourteen days prior to the scheduled date of the Referral Proceeding, and a copy of all papers must be served on the same date on the Department of Health attorney indicated below. Pursuant to §301(5) of the State Administrative Procedure Act, the Department, upon reasonable notice, will provide at no charge a qualified interpreter of the deaf to interpret the proceedings to, and the testimony of, any deaf person. Pursuant to the terms of N.Y. State Admin. Proc. Act §401 and 10 N.Y.C.R.R. §51.8(b), the Petitioner hereby demands disclosure of the evidence that the Respondent intends to introduce at the hearing, including the names of witnesses, a list of and copies of documentary evidence and a description of physical or other evidence which cannot be photocopied.

YOU ARE HEREBY ADVISED THAT THE ATTACHED CHARGES WILL BE MADE PUBLIC FIVE BUSINESS DAYS AFTER THEY ARE SERVED.

Department attorney: Initial here 

The proceeding may be held whether or not you appear. Please note that requests for adjournments must be made in writing to the Bureau of Adjudication, at the address indicated above, with a copy of the request to the attorney for the Department of Health, whose name

appears below, at least five days prior to the scheduled date of the proceeding. Adjournment requests are not routinely granted. Claims of court engagement will require detailed affidavits of actual engagement. Claims of illness will require medical documentation. Failure to obtain an attorney within a reasonable period of time prior to the proceeding will not be grounds for an adjournment.

The Committee will make a written report of its findings, conclusions as to guilt, and a determination. Such determination may be reviewed by the administrative review board for professional medical conduct.

THESE PROCEEDINGS MAY RESULT IN A .
DETERMINATION THAT YOUR LICENSE TO PRACTICE
MEDICINE IN NEW YORK STATE BE REVOKED OR
SUSPENDED, AND/OR THAT YOU BE FINED OR
SUBJECT TO OTHER SANCTIONS SET OUT IN NEW
YORK PUBLIC HEALTH LAW §§230-a. YOU ARE URGED
TO OBTAIN AN ATTORNEY TO REPRESENT YOU IN
THIS MATTER.

DATED: Albany, New York
December 13, 2016


MICHAEL A. HISER
Deputy Counsel
Bureau of Professional Medical Conduct

Inquiries should be addressed to:

**Ian Silverman
Associate Counsel
Bureau of Professional Medical Conduct
Corning Tower – Room 2512
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237
(518) 473-4282**

IN THE MATTER

OF

DONALD C. EDWARDS, M.D.

STATEMENT
OF
CHARGES

DONALD C. EDWARDS, M.D., the Respondent, was authorized to practice medicine in New York State on or about October 24, 1980 by the issuance of license number 143887 by the New York State Education Department.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

A. On or about May 27, 2015 the Florida Medical Board (hereinafter "Florida Board") issued Respondent an emergency restriction Order, restricting his controlled substance privileges prohibiting him from prescribing schedule II, III, IV or V medications. Between March 2008 and January 2015 Respondent treated 9 patients for chronic pain and prescribed excessively high doses of oxycodone, alprazolam, dilauidid, carlsoprodol, methadone, soma, valium, suboxone, and hydrocodone without adequate medical justification for doing so. On August 8, 2015 the Florida Board issued a Voluntary Relinquishment of License to Avoid Further Administrative Action against Respondent. Further, Respondent agreed to never reapply for licensure as a medical doctor in the state of Florida.

B. Respondent's conduct as described above, upon which the disciplinary action taken in Florida was based would, if committed in New York State, constitute professional misconduct under the laws of the State of New York as follows:

1. New York Education Law §6530(3) (practicing the profession with negligence on more than one occasion);
2. New York Education Law §6530(4) (practicing the profession with gross negligence on a particular occasion);
3. New York Education Law §6530(5) (practicing the profession with incompetence on more than one occasion);

4. New York Education Law §6530(6) (practicing the profession with gross incompetence);
5. New York Education Law §6530(20) (conduct in the practice of medicine which evidences moral unfitness to practice medicine) and/or
6. New York Education Law §6530(32) (failing to maintain a record for each patient which accurately reflects the evaluation and treatment of the patient).

SPECIFICATION OF CHARGES

FIRST SPECIFICATION

HAVING HAD DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN

Respondent is charged with committing professional misconduct as defined in N.Y. Educ. Law § 6530(9)(d) by having his or her license to practice medicine revoked, suspended or having other disciplinary action taken, or having his or her application for a license refused, revoked or suspended or having voluntarily or otherwise surrendered his or her license after a disciplinary action was instituted by a duly authorized professional disciplinary agency of another state, where the conduct resulting in the revocation, suspension or other disciplinary action involving the license or refusal, revocation or suspension of an application for a license or the surrender of the license would, if committed in New York state, constitute professional misconduct under the laws of New York state (namely N.Y. Educ. Law § 6530((3); (4); (5); (6); (20) and/or (32)) as alleged in the facts of the following:

1. The facts in Paragraph A and B.

DATE: December 13, 2016
Albany, New York


Michael A. Hiser
Deputy Counsel
Bureau of Professional Medical Conduct