IN THE MATTER OF	*	**BEFORE THE**
ASHLEY C. WILLIS, M.D.	*	**MARYLAND STATE**
Respondent	*	**BOARD OF PHYSICIANS**
License Number: D63773	*	**Case Number: 2223-0125B**

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ORDER FOR SUMMARY SUSPENSION OF LICENSE TO PRACTICE MEDICINE

Disciplinary Panel B ("Panel B") of the Maryland State Board of Physicians (the "Board") hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDS** the license to practice medicine of **ASHLEY C. WILLIS, M.D.** (the "Respondent"), License Number D63773, in the State of Maryland.

Panel B takes such action pursuant to its authority under Md. Code Ann., State Gov't ("State Gov't") § 10-226(c)(2) and Md. Code Regs. ("COMAR") 10.32.02.08B(7), concluding that the public health, safety or welfare imperatively requires emergency action.

INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

Based on information received by, and made known to Panel B, and the investigatory information obtained by, received by and made known to and available to Panel B, including the instances described below, Panel B has reason to believe that the following facts are true:[1]

[1] The statements regarding the Respondent's conduct are intended to provide the Respondent with reasonable notice of the basis of Panel B's action. They are not intended as, and do not necessarily represent, a complete description of the evidence, either documentary or testimonial, to be offered against the Respondent in connection with this matter.

Introduction

1. Panel B is summarily suspending the Respondent's license to practice medicine after a Board investigation determined that she has a health condition that affects her ability to practice medicine safely.

Background/Licensing Information

2. The Respondent was originally issued a license to practice medicine in Maryland on October 11, 2005, under License Number D63773. The Respondent has retained continuous licensure in Maryland since that time. The Respondent's license expires on September 30, 2025, subject to renewal.

3. The Respondent is board-certified in Internal Medicine.

4. At all relevant times, the Respondent practiced at a health care facility (the "Facility")[2] in Maryland.

The Complaint

5. The Board initiated an investigation of the Respondent after receiving a complaint (the "Complaint") on February 27, 2023, from a family member (the "Complainant") of a patient (the "Patient") of the Respondent. The Complainant alleged that the Respondent acted in a belligerent, verbally abusive and unprofessional manner toward the Patient during office visits in January and February 2023, such that the Patient, who was severely debilitated due to significant medical conditions, was afraid to return for

[2] For confidentiality reasons, the name of the health care facility, or the identity of the Complainant, the Patient, or any other individuals referenced herein, will not be disclosed in this document. The Respondent may obtain this information from the Board.

follow-up care with the Respondent. The Complainant stated that the Respondent improperly filled out the Patient's insurance paperwork, necessitating the Patient to return for a follow-up visit to correct the error. When the Patient brought the error to the Respondent's attention, the Respondent became "furious and belittled [the Patient's] well-being and instability." The Complainant referred to the Respondent's conduct as being "unethical and inhumane."

Board Investigation

6. As part of its investigation, the Board obtained the Respondent's written response to the Complaint, interviewed the Respondent, reviewed documents the Respondent submitted to the Board, obtained a portion of the Respondent's medical records, and referred the Respondent for an evaluation after the Respondent acted in an aberrant manner during the investigation.

Respondent's written response

7. By letter dated March 1, 2023, the Board notified the Respondent that a complaint had been filed against her and that it had opened a preliminary investigation into the matter. The Board provided the Respondent with a copy of the complaint and requested that she address the Complaint in a written response.

8. By email to the Board dated March 13, 2023, the Respondent submitted her written response to the allegations that were set forth in the Complaint. The Respondent's response was incoherent and did not directly address her behavior toward the Patient. When commenting on her documentation, the Respondent stated, "Didn't realize how sparse my note was until I looked at it."

Subpoena for patient records and response

9. By letter dated August 9, 2023, the Board informed the Respondent that it had opened an expanded investigation of the Complaint. The letter contained a *subpoena duces tecum* for nine patient records, to be returned within ten business days. The cover letter also requested that the Respondent provide a summary of care for each patient and provide signed Certification of Medical Records forms for each patient.

10. On August 23, 2023, the Respondent, through office staff at the Facility where she practiced, provided the nine requested records. In a separate mailing dated August 23, 2023, the Respondent provided brief summaries of care for each patient. In addition, the Respondent submitted over 50 pages of documents that addressed religious and secular subjects, mainly consisting of poems, with and without illustrations. These documents were wholly unrelated to any of the patients whose records were subpoenaed or the issues involved in the Complaint.

Respondent's interview

11. Through a letter and *subpoena ad testificandum* dated October 19, 2023, the Board directed the Respondent to appear for an in-person, under-oath interview at the Board's offices on November 2, 2023.

12. By email dated October 30, 2023, the Respondent requested that her interview be rescheduled, claiming that she had a scheduling conflict. The Board rescheduled the interview for November 8, 2023.

13. Board staff conducted an under-oath interview of the Respondent on November 8, 2023. The Respondent arrived approximately one-half hour late for the

interview. The Respondent exhibited unusual behavior during the interview, which included not making eye contact with Board staff and acting in a nervous manner. The Respondent spoke in a whisper during the interview and exhibited other unusual behavioral mannerisms, including twitching eyes.

14. Board staff informed the Respondent that they were unable to follow her previously submitted written response to the Complaint and requested that she address the allegations in her own words. Despite this request, the Respondent proceeded to read her written response verbatim, including grammatical errors, on the record. When Board staff asked the Respondent to refrain from reading her written response, the Respondent spoke over Board staff and continued to read aloud her written response verbatim.

15. During the interview, Board staff asked the Respondent several "yes" or "no" questions, to which the Respondent answered by nodding her head; when Board staff asked the Respondent to verbalize her responses, the Respondent continued to nod her head in response to questions posed throughout the interview. The Respondent spoke in a manner that required Board staff to ask her several times to speak in a louder, more audible voice. The Respondent took long pauses before answering questions and had difficulty giving direct responses, and in response to some questions, struggled to form any sort of response. The Respondent would often ask Board staff to repeat their questions.

16. During the interview, the Respondent discussed her medical and medication history.[3] When Board staff asked the Respondent to address her practice of initiating discussions with patients on her views of religious doctrine, she stated that she tells her patients to pray to Jesus. After Board staff concluded recording the interview, the Respondent continued to make several comments about religious subjects, including that she "loves God " and "loves Jesus".

17. About two hours after concluding the interview, the Respondent returned to the Board's offices and stated that she had lost her cell phone. Board staff helped the Respondent look for the cell phone but could not find it. While standing near the building elevators, the Respondent again told Board staff that she "loves God" and hopes that was made clear no matter what she said during the interview. In response to Board staff stating that they would inform the Respondent if they found her cell phone, the Respondent stated, "God is magnificent" and to always remember that.

Referral for evaluation and findings

18. As part of the Board's investigation, the Board, pursuant to Health Occ. § 14-402(a),[4] referred the Respondent to a Board-approved program (the "Program") for an independent evaluation to determine her present competency to practice medicine.

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[3] For confidentiality and/or privacy reasons, the specific information the Respondent disclosed will not be stated in this document. Panel B was aware of this information at the time it voted to summarily suspend the Respondent's medical license.

[4] Health Occ. § 14-402(a) states: In reviewing an application for licensure or in investigating an allegation brought against a licensed physician or any allied health professional regulated by the Board under this title, the Physician Rehabilitation Program may request the Board to direct, or the Board or a disciplinary panel on its own initiative may direct, the licensed physician or any allied health professional to an appropriate examination.

19. By letter dated November 15, 2023, the Board notified the Respondent that her evaluation would be conducted on November 27, 2023. On the morning of November 27, 2023, prior to the time scheduled for the interview, the Respondent requested that the evaluation be rescheduled, which the Program denied. The Respondent failed to present to the Program for the evaluation. The Board then rescheduled the evaluation for November 29, 2023. The Respondent did not present to the Program for the evaluation on that date, however.

20. By email dated December 1, 2023, the Board requested that the Respondent explain in writing why she failed to appear for both of the above appointments. The Respondent responded in an email dated December 1, 2023, stating, "I do not smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, smoke marijuana or any other drug so I do not need rehab for any reason. Sorry, I missed your letter for an appointment. Please let me reschedule and I promise to attend."

21. The Board then scheduled the evaluation for December 6, 2023. On that date, a team of Program evaluators met with and evaluated the Respondent. The Program evaluators unanimously concluded that based on the Respondent's writings, interviews, behavior during the evaluation, complex medical history and other pertinent information, the Respondent "is not able to practice medicine safely."[5]

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[5] For confidentiality and/or privacy reasons, the specific information contained in the report will not be disclosed in this document. This information will be disclosed to the Respondent upon request. Panel B was aware of this information at the time it voted to summarily suspend the Respondent's medical license.

22. After performing the evaluation, the Program, on December 8, 2023, requested that the Respondent enter into a practice cessation agreement and sent her a practice cessation agreement form for that purpose. Although the Respondent agreed to cease practicing medicine, the Respondent has not signed the practice cessation agreement.

Other email correspondence

23. Shortly after the above evaluation, the Respondent sent a barrage of emails to the Board in which she attached: her medical records, including several imaging studies; poems she claimed she wrote, some of which contained religious content; photographs; and published medical information on bipolar disorder. Most of the emails were wholly unrelated to the Complaint or other issues that are pertinent to this matter.

24. The Respondent also sent many of the same emails to the Program, which forwarded them to the Board. Many of the emails the Respondent sent the Program were unrelated to the Complaint or other issues that are pertinent to this matter.

25. In response, the Program, on December 15, 2023, emailed the Respondent and requested that she refrain from sending any further emails to the Program.

CONCLUSION OF LAW

Based upon the foregoing Investigative Findings, Panel B of the Board concludes that the public health, safety, or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, and that pursuant to State Gov't § 10-226(c)(2) and COMAR 10.32.02.08B(7), the Respondent's license is summarily suspended.

ORDER

IT IS thus, by Panel B of the Board, hereby:

ORDERED that pursuant to the authority vested in Panel B by State Govt. § 10-226(c)(2) and COMAR 10.32.02.08B(7), the Respondent's license to practice medicine in the State of Maryland is hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDED;** and it is further

ORDERED that, during the course of the summary suspension, the Respondent shall not practice medicine in the State of Maryland; and it is further

ORDERED that in accordance with Md. Code Regs. 10.32.02.08B(7) and E, a post-deprivation initial hearing on the summary suspension will be held on **Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 12:30 p.m.** at the Board's offices, located at 4201 Patterson Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21215-0095; and it is further

ORDERED that after the **SUMMARY SUSPENSION** hearing before Panel B, the Respondent, if dissatisfied with the result of the hearing, may request, within ten (10) days, an evidentiary hearing, such hearing to be set within thirty (30) days of the request, before an Administrative Law Judge at the Office of Administrative Hearings, Administrative Law Building, 11101 Gilroy Road, Hunt Valley, Maryland 21031-1301;

and it is further

ORDERED that this is an Order of Panel B, and as such, is a public document. *See* Health Occ. §§ 1-607, 14-411.1(b)(2) and Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. § 4-333(b)(6).

01/09/2024
Date

Signature On File

Christine A. Farrelly, Executive Director
Maryland State Board of Physicians