IN THE MATTER OF	*	**BEFORE THE**
RAMON APARECE	*	**MARYLAND STATE**
Respondent	*	**BOARD OF PHYSICIANS**
UNLICENSED	*	**Case Number: 2220-0219**

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

CONSENT ORDER

On September 9, 2021, Disciplinary Panel A ("Panel A") of the Maryland State Board of Physicians (the "Board") issued an Order for **RAMON APARECE** (the "Respondent"), an unlicensed individual, to Cease and Desist from the practice of medicine. On September 16, 2021, the Board charged the Respondent with violations of the Maryland Medical Practice Act (the "Act"), Md. Code Ann., Health Occupations ("Health Occ.") §§ 14-101 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. & 2020 Supp.).

Panel A charged the Respondent under the following provisions of the Act:

Health Occ. § 14-101. Definitions.

(o) *Practice medicine.* – (1) "Practice medicine" means to engage, with or without compensation, in medical:

(i) Diagnosis;
(ii) Healing;
(iii) Treatment; or
(iv) Surgery.

(2) "Practice medicine" includes doing, undertaking, professing to do, and attempting any of the following:

(i) Diagnosing, healing, treating, preventing, prescribing for, or removing any physical, mental, or emotional ailment or supposed ailment of an individual:

1. By physical, mental, emotional, or other process that is exercised or invoked by the practitioner, the patient, or both; or

2. By appliance, test, drug, operation, or treatment[.]

Health Occ. § 14-601. Practicing without license.

Except as otherwise provided in this title, a person may not practice, attempt to practice, or offer to practice medicine in this State unless licensed by the Board.

Health Occ. § 14-602. Misrepresentation as a practitioner of medicine.

(a) *In general.* -- Unless authorized to practice medicine under this title, a person may not represent to the public, by description of services, methods, or procedures, or otherwise, that the person is authorized to practice medicine in this State.

(b) *Certain representations prohibited.* -- Except as otherwise provided in this article, a person may not use the words or terms "Dr.", "doctor", "physician", "D.O.", or "M.D." with the intent to represent that the person practices medicine, unless the person is:

(1) Licensed to practice medicine under this title;

(2) A physician licensed by and residing in another jurisdiction, while engaging in consultation with a physician licensed in this State;

(3) A physician employed by the federal government while performing duties incident to that employment;

(4) A physician who resides in and is licensed to practice medicine by any state adjoining this State and whose practice extends into this State; or

(5) An individual in a postgraduate medical program that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the Board in regulations while the individual is practicing medicine in the program.

Health Occ. § 14-606. Penalties.

(a) *Imposition of penalties. . . .*

. . .

(4) Except as provided in paragraph (5) of this subsection,[1] a person who violates § 14-601 or § 14-602 of this subtitle is:

. . .

(ii) Subject to a civil fine of not more than $50,000 to be levied by a disciplinary panel.

On December 1, 2021, Panel A was convened as a Disciplinary Committee for Case Resolution ("DCCR") in this matter. Based on negotiations occurring as a result of the DCCR, the Respondent agreed to enter this Consent Order, consisting of the following Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Panel A finds:

I. BACKGROUND AND COMPLAINT

1. At all relevant times, the Respondent has never been licensed to practice medicine in the State of Maryland. He has never been licensed or certified by any health occupations licensing board in Maryland. At all relevant times, the Respondent has resided in Maryland.

2. On or about March 5, 2020, the Board received a complaint from an acquaintance of the Respondent's (the "Complainant")[2] alleging that the Respondent represented to her and other individuals in and around Baltimore, Maryland, that the Respondent was a physician licensed to practice medicine in Maryland, specifically, a dermatology resident at Hospital A.

[1] Health Occ. § 14-606(a)(5) exempts former licensees who, under certain conditions, do not timely renew their licenses. This paragraph does not apply in this case.

[2] For confidentiality and privacy purposes, the names of witnesses, patients, health care providers, health care facilities, and other institutions are not disclosed in this Consent Order.

3. The Complainant alleged that since she met the Respondent in approximately November 2018, he had been representing himself as a dermatologist and treating her rosacea. Since that time, the Respondent mailed her "multiple prescriptions, everything from metronidazole cream, doxycycline to tretinoin cream and sulfa cleanse. He'd write prescriptions to himself and them mail [the medications] to me in Chicago," where the Complainant primarily resided. The Complainant reported that the Respondent used the DEA number of his former spouse, a licensed Maryland physician, to write and fill the prescriptions at Maryland pharmacies. The Complainant reported that she contacted the Respondent's former spouse, who stated in response that she knew the Respondent had used her DEA number to write fraudulent prescriptions in the past, but did not want to become involved currently.

4. In February 2020, the Complainant became aware that the Respondent was not in fact a physician. The Complainant also reported that the Respondent was misrepresenting himself as a physician to others as well.

5. Attached to the complaint, the Complainant provided copies of numerous emails from the Respondent to her, in which he represented himself as a dermatologist, offered detailed medical advice, offered to prescribe medications in other individuals' names and send them to her, and described treating other "patients."

6. Also attached to the complaint was a fraudulent document the Respondent created in the appearance of a typed prescription written by the Respondent's former spouse on her letterhead to the Respondent, for a controlled dangerous substance (CDS).

7. Based on the complaint, the Board opened an investigation of the Respondent.

II. BOARD INVESTIGATION

8. In furtherance of the investigation, the Board's investigators obtained relevant documents, including prescription records, photographic evidence, text messages, voicemails, emails, and written statements, and also conducted interviews under oath with relevant witnesses, including the Respondent.

Interview with the Complainant

9. On or about April 2, 2020, Board staff interviewed the Complainant under oath.

10. The Complainant stated that the Respondent first introduced himself to her as a dermatologist in late 2018. At their first meeting, which occurred at his home in Baltimore, Maryland, the Respondent examined her skin and spoke with her for about 30 minutes about her rosacea and possible treatments. Then he performed a "dermaplane" procedure[3] on the Complainant. The Complainant described that in order to perform the procedure, the Respondent, "scraped my skin with a scalpel. ...And he told me that he would like to take over as my dermatologist and that I could always call him."

11. The Complainant lived in Chicago, Illinois, but following their initial meeting and throughout their relationship, the Respondent began communicating with the Complainant primarily through email and phone calls.

12. During her interview, the Complainant confirmed the content of her written complaint to the Board. In addition, she stated the following:

[3] Dermaplaning is a procedure that exfoliates your skin and gets rid of dirt and vellus hair, better known as "peach fuzz."

a. The Respondent resided in a house in Baltimore, Maryland, which he shared with two other people ("Housemate A and Housemate B").

b. The Respondent falsely represented himself to Housemates A and B, the Complainant, and the Complainant's sister as a licensed physician, specifically, a dermatology resident at Hospital A.

c. The Respondent's father, brother, and former spouse are physicians.

d. The Respondent was pursuing the Complainant romantically.

e. The Respondent pretended he was struggling with a rare and severe brain cancer, in order to garner her attention.

f. The Respondent created different email addresses and sent the Complainant messages in the guise of other individuals. These adopted identities included the Respondent's daughter, and a fictitious friend of the Respondent, supposedly also a physician. The Respondent acted in this way to "corroborate" the Respondent's lies.

g. The Respondent offered to obtain many prescription medications for the Complainant for no cost.

h. The Respondent mailed the Complainant prescription medications including Tretinoin Cream and Doxycycline.

i. On many mailings, the Respondent wrote his return address salutation as "Dr. Ramon Aparece."

j. The Respondent often provided her medical advice and recommendations and directions for skin care routines, including

Botox, laser and UV treatments for her rosacea, and offered to get her the "friends and family" discount at Hospital A.

k. The Respondent often claimed to treat patients at highly lucrative Botox "injectables parties."

l. The Respondent used stationary headed "Ramon Aparece, M.D."

m. The Respondent possessed medical textbooks and medical instruments, including syringes, skin treatment medications, gloves, etc. in his room.

n. In or around March 2019, the Respondent invited the Complainant to travel with him to Sarasota, Florida, where the two stayed at a luxury hotel. During their stay, the Respondent portrayed himself to the Complainant and to the hotel management as the committee chair and organizer for his medical school alumni reunion celebration, which was supposedly going to occur soon. The hotel appealed to the Respondent by offering complimentary food and champagne, conducting tours of their banquet halls and ballrooms, and preparing a detailed proposal for "Dr. Ramon Aparece." According to the Complainant, the hotel "sent things to our rooms and, you know, took really, really good care of us, because they thought they were courting like $200,000 worth of business."

o. During the trip in Florida, the Respondent provided the Complainant Estazolam, a prescription sleeping aid.

p. The Respondent provided antidepressant prescription medication to Housemate B.

q. The Complainant became suspicious of the Respondent in or around February 2020, when the Respondent was supposedly hospitalized in a coma due to his brain cancer. The Complainant contacted Hospital A, who confirmed it had no affiliation with the Respondent. The Complainant then contacted Housemate A, who stated that the Respondent was actually "up in his room, he never leaves."

r. The Respondent was in fact unemployed.

s. The Complainant also contacted the Respondent's former spouse, who told her she was aware of the Respondent's misrepresentations and his use of her DEA registration number to forge prescriptions in the past.

t. When the Complainant confronted the Respondent directly, he asked her not to report him to the police, and stated it would be cruel to his children to report him.

u. Eventually, the Complainant learned that the Respondent had obtained his prescription medications by forging prescriptions using his former spouse's DEA registration information.

v. The Respondent abused alcohol and prescriptions drugs that he obtained with his forged prescriptions.

w. The Complainant stated she complained because "he could have really hurt me," and she did not want him to treat anyone else in the same way.

Written Communications

13. A review of the written and transcribed communications from the Respondent to the Complainant confirm the Complainant's statements and reveal that the Respondent crafted a detailed fictitious self-portrait, in which he portrayed a highly successful dermatology resident.

14. For example, he described the daily challenges of his rounds as a dermatology resident at Hospital A, flying across the country shepherding emergency transplant organs to their destinations, treating celebrity patients, hosting lavish monthly Botox "injectables parties," presenting at elite medical conferences, and holding friendships with eminent physicians who had supposedly been his classmates in medical school.

15. Many emails contained detailed medical treatment recommendations and advice for maintaining her skin.

16. The Respondent created a false medical record dated August 5, 2019. The document lists the Complainant's name for the "Patient Name." The document contains a medical analysis of her condition, medical history, list of current prescription and non-prescription medications that he had provided for her, current symptoms, recommendation, and additional notes on treatment. The Respondent signed the document "R. Aparece, MD MBA, PGY-2."

Interview with Respondent's Former Spouse

17. On or about November 24, 2020, the Board's investigator conducted an interview with the Respondent's former spouse under oath. The Respondent's former spouse made the following statements:

a. The Respondent has falsely represented himself as a medical student or physician for many years.

b. She is aware that the Respondent has used her DEA information to forge prescriptions and obtain prescription medication "for years." However, she took no concrete action to stop him, other than telling him to stop.

c. Any prescriptions written to the Respondent ostensibly in her name dated after 2011, when the two divorced, are the Respondent's forgeries.

d. When contacted by the Complainant in February 2020, and told that the Respondent is using her DEA registration information in order to obtain prescription medications, the Respondent's former spouse filed a police report about the issue and attempted to file an online report with the DEA. She has not received any follow-up information after making the reports.

18. Following the interview, on or about December 2, 2020, the Respondent's former spouse wrote a letter to the Board in which she stated that the Respondent "masquerades as a surgeon," and has even "forged medical licenses." Attached to the letter was an example of a forged document ostensibly in the appearance of a Maryland

medical license dated March 28, 2007, authorizing the Respondent to practice medicine in Maryland.

Interview with Housemate A

19. On or about December 3, 2020, the Board's investigator conducted an interview with Housemate A under oath. Housemate A made the following statements:

a. When the Respondent first introduced himself to Housemate A, "He said he was a doctor." Specifically, the Respondent represented himself as a dermatology resident at Hospital A.

b. The Respondent introduced himself as a physician regularly: "Anytime he would meet with someone he would present himself as a medical doctor."

c. The Respondent offered to provide prescription medication to Housemate A.

d. The Respondent wrote prescriptions and provided the medications to Housemate B.

e. The Respondent rarely left his room, which made it obvious that he was not in fact a dermatology resident.

f. Housemates A and B frequently found numerous empty prescription medication bottles in the garbage, with the labels torn so it was not possible to see who the prescribing physician was. However, on at least one of them, it was possible to see part of the Respondent's former spouse's somewhat distinctive name listed as the prescriber.

In this way, Housemates A and B discovered the Respondent was misappropriating his former spouse's prescribing authority.

g. The last time Housemate A had contact with the Respondent was in or around February 2020, when Housemates A and B pressured the Respondent to leave. When the Respondent agreed, Housemate A dropped him off at a rehabilitation treatment facility.

Interview with Housemate B

20. On or about December 3, 2020, the Board's investigator conducted an interview with Housemate B under oath. Housemate B made the following statements:

a. The Respondent wrote a prescription for an antidepressant medication in his own name, filled it at a pharmacy himself, and gave the medication to her. Along with the medication, the Respondent provided medical instructions regarding its use.

b. At the time, Housemate B did not have health insurance.

The Respondent's Written Response to the Board

21. On or about December 29, 2020, the Board received from the Respondent a written response to the allegations made in the complaint. In his written response, the Respondent acknowledged that he does not hold any license to practice medicine or any medical degree. He stated that since approximately 2001, he has abused at least four prescription medications, including CDS. He admitted that since 2005 until at least February 2020, he has repeatedly obtained these four drugs by writing prescriptions to himself using his former spouse's prescribing information. He stated that he "never sold or distributed any of these medications to anyone else."

22. He also acknowledged misusing his former spouse's prescribing information in the same way to obtain at least four other types of prescription medication he used.

23. The Respondent explained his forgery technique: "I created all the prescription documents myself using Microsoft Word on my computer..." Then, "I would fill the prescriptions at [local pharmacies] in or around Baltimore City, Maryland, and ... Towson, Maryland."

24. The Respondent wrote: "I never prescribed medication for anyone other than myself..." However, this statement is misleading. The Board obtained evidence in the form of sworn statements and written documents showing that the Respondent also provided prescription drugs to others including Housemate B and the Complainant. He obtained these medications by prescribing them fraudulently to himself.

25. He also stated, "Given the concurrent use of these medications with alcohol, I would not recall writing, submitting, or obtaining some of these prescriptions."

Board Interview with the Respondent

26. On or about January 12, 2021, the Board's investigator conducted an interview with the Respondent under oath. During the interview, the Respondent acknowledged the following:

a. He has no medical training or licensure in Maryland or any other state.

b. He stated that due to perceived social and family pressure and a sense of embarrassment at his true situation as a "stay-at-home parent," he has represented himself as a medical student or physician

beginning in approximately 1995, and "the lie...just perpetuated from there, unfortunately."

c. He acknowledged regularly introducing himself to others as a doctor and identifying himself as such on social media.

d. In or around April 2017, he moved to a house where he rented a room with Housemate A and Housemate B. He represented himself to them as a dermatologist with prescribing authority.

e. He acknowledged writing a prescription for an antidepressant to himself and then giving it to Housemate B. The prescription also included several refills. He obtained this and other prescriptions by forging them on word processing software on his computer, and using his former spouse's DEA prescribing information. "I would take the stickers off because I didn't want her to see that it was like from [my former spouse]."

f. He acknowledged portraying himself as a physician to the Complainant and the Complainant's sister.

g. He acknowledged providing prescription medications to the Complainant and the Complainant's sister.

h. He admitted giving medical and treatment advice to the Complainant. He based the advice on what he found on the internet.

i. He acknowledged performing a dermaplane procedure on the Complainant in 2018 "using a razor or a ... beveled scalpel."

j. He acknowledged using stationary he obtained from his father, a physician with the same name, to portray himself as "Ramon Aparece, M.D." to the Complainant.

k. He acknowledged creating a medical record for the Complainant, dated August 5, 2019, but stated it was "completely as a joke."

l. When confronted with specific prescription records the Board obtained, the Respondent admitted to forging at least twelve prescriptions, including CDS.

m. He acknowledged representing himself as a physician when he travelled with the Complainant to a Florida hotel, and pretending to be in charge of planning a medical school reunion party, which resulted in the hotel providing him a room for a night at no cost.

Letter to the Board

27. On or about January 16, 2021, following the Respondent's interview with the Board, the Respondent wrote a letter to the Board's investigator in which he expressed regret for "the lying and misrepresentation, all out of shame, ego and senseless bravado."

28. With regard to his providing prescription medication to others, he stated, "I did none of this with the intent of physically harming anyone. I merely chose the wrong way to help people like [the Complainant and Housemate B], who didn't have health insurance at that time."

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, Panel A concludes as a matter of law that the Respondent practiced, attempt to practice, or offered to practice medicine in Maryland without being licensed by the Board, in violation of Health Occ. § 14-601; misrepresented to the public, by description of services, methods, or procedures, or otherwise, that the Respondent was and is authorized to practice medicine in Maryland, in violation of Health Occ. § 14-602(a); and used of the terms "Dr.," "doctor," "physician," and/or "M.D." with the intent to represent that the Respondent practices medicine, in violation of Health Occ. § 14-602(b).

ORDER

It is thus by Disciplinary Panel A of the Board, hereby

ORDERED that Respondent, Ramon Aparece, shall continue to **CEASE AND DESIST** from the practice of medicine; and it is further

ORDERED that within **THREE YEARS**, the Respondent shall pay a civil fine of $20,000. The Payment shall be by money order or bank certified check made payable to the Maryland Board of Physicians and mailed to P.O. Box 37217, Baltimore, Maryland 21297; and it is further

ORDERED that this Consent Order is a public document. *See* Health Occ. §§ 1-607, 14-411.1(b)(2) and Gen. Prov. § 4-333(b)(6).

01/06/2022
Date

Signature on File

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

CONSENT

I, Ramon Aparece, acknowledge that I have consulted with counsel before signing this document.

By this Consent, I agree to be bound by this Consent Order and all its terms and conditions and understand that the disciplinary panel will not entertain any request for amendments or modifications to any condition.

I assert that I am aware of my right to a formal evidentiary hearing, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 14-405 and Md. Code Ann., State Gov't §§ 10-201 *et seq.* concerning the pending charges. I waive this right and have elected to sign this Consent Order instead.

I acknowledge the validity and enforceability of this Consent Order as if entered after the conclusion of a formal evidentiary hearing in which I would have had the right to counsel, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to call witnesses on my behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural protections as provided by law. I waive those procedural and substantive protections. I acknowledge the legal authority and the jurisdiction of the disciplinary panel to initiate these proceedings and to issue and enforce this Consent Order.

I voluntarily enter into and agree to comply with the terms and conditions set forth in the Consent Order as a resolution of the charges. I waive any right to contest the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law and Order set out in the Consent Order. I waive all rights to appeal this Consent Order.

I sign this Consent Order, without reservation, and fully understand the language and meaning of its terms.

Signature on File

12/27/2021

Date

Ramon Aparece

NOTARY

STATE OF Maryland

CITY/COUNTY OF Baltimore City

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 27th day of December, 2021, before me, a Notary Public of the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared Ramon Aparece, and gave oath in due form of law that the foregoing Consent Order was his voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS, my hand and Notary Seal.

QUENTIN JONES JR.
Notary Public-Maryland
Baltimore City
My Commission Expires
March 12, 2023

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 03.12.2023