

IN THE MATTER OF
PATRICIA C. ONUOHA

Respondent

Unlicensed

*** BEFORE THE**
*** MARYLAND STATE**
*** BOARD OF PHYSICIANS**
*** Case Number: 2219-0040B**

* * * * *

CEASE AND DESIST ORDER

Pursuant to the authority granted to Disciplinary Panel B (“Panel B”) of the Maryland State Board of Physicians (the “Board”) under Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. (“Health Occ.”) § 14-206(e)(1) (2014 Repl. Vol. & 2018 Supp.), Panel B hereby orders **PATRICIA C. ONUOHA** (the “Respondent”), unlicensed, to immediately **CEASE AND DESIST** from all activities associated with the practice of medicine as defined in Health Occ. § 14-101(o).

The pertinent provisions of the Medical Practice Act (“Act”) under which Panel B issues this Order provide the following:

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. § 14-206. Judicial Powers.

- (e) *Cease and desist orders; injunctions.* - A disciplinary panel may issue a cease and desist order or obtain injunctive relief against an individual for:
 - (1) Practicing medicine without a license[.]

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.

INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS¹

Panel B's determinations are based upon the following findings of fact:²

¹ The statements regarding the Respondent's conduct are intended to provide the Respondent with reasonable notice of the basis of the Cease and Desist Order. 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.

² The statements regarding Panel B's findings are intended to provide Respondent with notice of the basis of the cease and desist order. They are not intended as, and do not necessarily represent, a complete description of the evidence, either documentary or testimonial, to be offered against Respondent, if necessary, in connection with this matter.

I. BACKGROUND

1. At all times relevant to this Cease and Desist Order, the Respondent was not and is not a physician licensed to practice medicine in the State of Maryland. The Respondent has never been licensed as a physician in this State.

2. On June 16, 2018, the Maryland State Board of Nursing issued the Respondent a certified nursing assistant (“CNA”) certification under Certification Number A00174876. The Respondent’s CNA certification remains active until December 28, 2020.

3. At all times relevant to this Cease and Desist Order, the Respondent maintained an office (the “Office”) at 6492 Landover Road, Cheverly, Maryland 20785.

II. THE COMPLAINT

4. The Board initiated an investigation of the Respondent after receiving a complaint, dated September 12, 2018, from an individual (the “Complainant”)³ who alleged that the Respondent is a “fake physician” who is practicing at an office in Cheverly, Maryland. The Complainant stated that the Respondent claims to have a medical degree and a PhD from a “scam school,” the British West Indies College of Medicine. The Complainant reported that the Respondent has an online biography on the website *painmanagementdirectory.com* and stated that “depending on who she is

³ For confidentiality reasons, the name of the Complainant will not be disclosed in this document. The Respondent may obtain the identity of any individual referenced herein by contacting the assigned administrative prosecutor.

scamming, she is either a physician, a psychoanalyst, a research scientist . . . a pain specialist [or] a malaria expert”

III. BOARD INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

5. The Board’s investigation determined that the Respondent attempted or offered to practice medicine in Maryland without a Board license, in violation of Health Occ. § 14-601. The Board’s investigation further determined that the Respondent attempted or offered to practice medicine when she represented herself to the public, by description of services, methods, procedures, or otherwise, that she was authorized to practice medicine in Maryland, without authorization;⁴ and by using the terms “Dr.”, “doctor”, and/or “M.D.” in internet postings and when applying for a State laboratory permit.⁵

6. The Board’s investigation involved a review of a variety of materials, including the website the Complainant referenced in his complaint, other internet-related materials, an interview of the Respondent, and a review of documentary materials, including a State laboratory application the Respondent submitted in September 2018. The Board also conducted a site review of the Respondent’s Office.

⁴ Such representations constitute a violation of Health Occ. § 14-602(a), which states, “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.”

⁵ Such representations constitute a violation of Health Occ. § 14-602(b)(1), which provides, “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: Licensed to practice medicine under this title[.]”

Internet postings

7. The Respondent posted on the website *painmanagementdirectory.com* and on the website LinkedIn. The Respondent identified herself on *painmanagementdirectory.com* as “Dr. Patricia C. Onuoha, PhD, MD, DIP, BCCS, BCC.” The Respondent described herself as a “cognitive specialist” who performs biofeedback, electrical stimulation therapies, “mind body medicine,” neurofeedback, nutritional medicine, psychotherapy and substance abuse treatment. The Respondent identified her location as being in “Cheverly, Maryland 20785.” The Respondent writes on the site, “I am Dr. Patricia Chinwe Onuoha, a seasoned Medical Practitioner . . . My purpose is to apply my wide knowledge in making diagnosis and treating the findings through various approach (sic)” On the website under “Testimonials,” the Respondent writes, “Applying strong skill of diagnosis, assessment and then management of clients of P & A Clinic makes the difference. Clients reported that their sleep has improved, neuronal pain, fibromyalgia (sic) migraine and pounding headache reduced drastically” and that “diabetes, arthritis and rheumatism has (sic) been well managed through P & A nutritional approach and guidance, detoxification and education with wellness coaching among others.” The Respondent listed her LinkedIn profile on this website.

8. The Respondent’s LinkedIn profile states that the Respondent has a medical degree and diploma in international medicine from the University of Science Arts and Technology, College of Medicine Montserrat British West Indies (years attended, 2013-2016). The Respondent stated on her profile that she is a “seasoned Medical Professional

with PhD in Public Health, an MD Degree, Diploma in International Medicine and a Board Certified Cognitive Specialist and Cognitive Coach.” On the profile under “Experience,” the Respondent noted that since June 2017, she has been working in a “Health Clinic” in Landover, Maryland, where she is involved in “General Health Assessment and Management.”

Respondent’s laboratory application

9. In September 2018, the Respondent applied to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“MDH”),⁶ Office of Health Care Quality—Laboratory Licensing Programs, for a laboratory license.

10. The Board contacted an MDH administrator who was in the process of reviewing the Respondent’s laboratory application. The administrator stated that MDH had not approved the Respondent’s application due to its inability to verify the Respondent’s academic degrees. The administrator stated that the Respondent “has emailed [him] every week” and during those contacts, identified herself as a physician.

11. The Respondent identified herself in the laboratory application as “Dr. Patricia C. Onuoha,” and as laboratory director, with an address of 6492 Landover Road, Cheverly, Maryland 20785. The Respondent listed the laboratory practice as “P & A Health Assessment and Management LLC.”

12. The Respondent also submitted a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (“CLIA”) Application for Certification form in conjunction with her

⁶ The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has since been renamed the Maryland Department of Health.

laboratory application. This form is dated September 11, 2018. In it, the Respondent listed her credentials as “PhD, MD.” The Respondent stated that her laboratory intended to perform testing including “dip stick urinalysis, gluometer (sic), toxicology, chemistry/cholesterol check, endocrinology.” The Respondent stated that her laboratory is for a “community clinic.”

13. The MDH reportedly denied the Respondent’s laboratory application in or around December 2018.

Site visit, January 28, 2019

14. Board staff made an unannounced site visit to the Respondent’s Cheverly, Maryland Office on January 28, 2019. Board staff observed that the Office contained two examination tables, a stethoscope, a medical dictionary and a DUI (driving while under the influence) test kit with a bottle of liquor.

Respondent’s written response to the complaint

15. In a letter dated January 28, 2019, the Board informed the Respondent that it had initiated an investigation of her based on allegations that she was practicing medicine in Maryland without a license. The Board also issued the Respondent a series of subpoenas, one of which was for copies of any academic degrees or professional credentials she earned.

16. The Respondent responded by letter dated January 31, 2019. The Respondent stated that she rented an office at 6492 Landover Road, Suite D2, Cheverly, Maryland “with the goal of operating a pre-employment drug testing & DUI Education center or a point of care referral center” The Respondent stated that she registered a

limited liability corporation by the name of “P & A Health Assessment & Management” for this purpose. The Respondent denied hiring anyone or advertising the facility as open for operations.

17. With respect to her credentials, the Respondent claimed that she was graduated from a “recognized medical college,” was eligible to take the “forthcoming US medical board exam (USMLE),” but was not licensed to practice medicine in Maryland or any other jurisdiction. The Respondent stated, “I have not in any form or shape operated any clinic nor paraded myself as a licensed physician in the state (sic) of Maryland or anywhere else.”

18. The Respondent provided a series of documents/certificates, which included a transcript, purportedly from the University of Science, Arts & Technology, Montserrat. The transcript is variously marked as either being an “official transcript” and an “unofficial transcript.” The Respondent also provided another document, a certificate of completion dated June 30, 2017, which represents that she obtained “twelve contact hours” in coursework involving pain management and assessment. The certificate refers to the Respondent as “Dr. Patricia Chinwe Onuoha PhD, MD, DIP.”

The Respondent’s interview

19. Board staff conducted an under-oath interview of the Respondent on April 1, 2019. The Respondent stated that in or around June 2017, she began renting space in an office in Landover, Maryland under the name of “P & A Health Assessment and Management.” The Respondent stated that although she is allowed to practice medicine in Africa, she is not a licensed physician in the United States.

Consultant's findings

20. The Board provided its investigative information to the Board's Consultant for review. The Consultant issued a report dated July 23, 2019, concluding that the Respondent attempted or offered to practice without a license, in violation of Health Occ. § 14-601. The Consultant found that the Respondent attempted or offered to practice medicine in that in she rented office space and in September 2018, applied to MDH for a laboratory license for purposes of opening a community clinic. In that application, the Respondent stated that she was an "MD." The Respondent furnished the clinic with two examination tables, a stethoscope, a medical dictionary, and other appurtenances that are typically associated with a medical office. The Respondent advertised herself on a website, *paintreatmentdirectory.com*, describing herself as a medical doctor and a "seasoned Medical Practitioner."

CONCLUSION OF LAW

Based on the foregoing investigative findings, Panel B concludes, as a matter of law, that the Respondent: practiced, attempted to practice, or offered to medicine without a license, as defined in Health Occ. § 14-101(o)(2), in violation of Health Occ. § 14-601. By representing herself to the public by her description of services, methods, procedures and otherwise, that she was authorized to practice medicine in this State, when she was not so authorized⁷, and by referring to herself as "Dr.," "doctor" and "M.D." with the intent to represent that she practices medicine, without being licensed to practice

⁷ Such misrepresentation is prohibited under Health Occ. § 14-602(a).

medicine in this State,⁸ the Respondent undertook, professed to do, and attempted to practice medicine, by diagnosing, healing, treating, preventing, or removing any physical, mental or emotional ailment or supposed ailments of individuals and by invoking a physical mental, emotional, or other process, or by test.

ORDER

Based on the investigative findings and Panel B's conclusion of law that the Respondent practiced, attempted to practice, or offered to practice medicine without a license, it is hereby:

ORDERED that, pursuant to the authority vested by the Maryland Medical Practice Act, Health Occ. § 14-206(e)(1), the Respondent shall **IMMEDIATELY CEASE AND DESIST** from practicing, attempting to practice, or offering to practice medicine. and it is further

ORDERED that this order is **EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY** pursuant to Md. Code Regs. 10.32.02.11E (1)(b); and it is further

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

09/19/2019
Date

Signature on File

Christine A. Farrelly
Executive Director
Maryland State Board of Physicians

⁸ Use of the words or terms "Dr." "doctor" or M.D." with the intent to represent that the person practices medicine, is prohibited under Health Occ. § 14-602(b).

NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR A HEARING

The Respondent may challenge the factual or legal basis of this Order by filing a written opposition within 30 days of its issuance. The Respondent has a right to a hearing but must request a hearing within 30 days of the issuance of this Order. The written opposition and/or request for a hearing should be made to: Christine A. Farrelly, Executive Director, Maryland State Board of Physicians, 4201 Patterson Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21215, with a copy mailed to Robert J. Gilbert Deputy Counsel, Health Occupations Prosecution and Litigation Division, Office of the Attorney General, 300 West Preston Street, Suite 201, Baltimore, Maryland 21201. If the Respondent files a written opposition, the Board will consider that opposition and will provide a hearing, if requested. If the Respondent does not file a written opposition, the Respondent will lose the right to challenge this Initial Order to Cease and Desist.