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NEWS

GEORGETOWN DOCTOR FOUND GUILTY OF SEX ABUSE KEEPS HIS LICENCE TO PRACTISE

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A Georgetown physician has been suspended for 14 months for showing photos of himself naked to patients and staff.

Dr. Nigel Mark Phipps was found guilty last year by a five-member discipline panel at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario of sexually abusing 11 female patients by showing them the naked selfies.

Phipps had admitted to the panel that he showed the patients and staff members an array of photos on his cellphone, but denied that it constituted sexual abuse.

The photos included: one where Phipps is naked with his penis visible, one of Phipps' naked buttocks, one where he's naked from the groin up but where the genitals are not visible and a fourth showing him naked with a towel over his arm.

The panel also found that Phipps had an erection during two of the patient encounters.

Ontario law stipulates that certain acts of sexual abuse by health care professionals require that their licence be automatically revoked. While Phipps' conduct fell outside the list of acts requiring mandatory revocation, the college still argued at his penalty hearing this year that his licence be revoked.

But the discipline panel sided with the doctor's lawyer who had requested a suspension between 14 to 18 months.

Aside from the suspension, which takes effect Oct. 1, Phipps must post credit in the amount of



Torstar file photo

Dr. Nigel Mark Phipps has been suspended for 14 months for showing photos of himself naked to patients and staff.

\$176,660 to cover potential therapy costs for his patients.

Once he has served his suspension, he may not see any patient unless in the presence of another health-care professional. He must also continue to see a college-approved psychiatrist who must provide the college with regular reports.

"It is the college's position that Dr. Phipps' conduct towards his patients during medical appointments is a breach of the high public trust granted to physicians and has caused harm to patients, to the public and to the profession," the college told Torstar in a statement.

"Although revocation was not mandatory in this case, we believe it was the appropriate penalty for a case involving both a breach of trust and sexual abuse of many patients of the type that is at issue in this case."

Phipps' lawyer did not immediately return a request for comment.

Some of Phipps' patients said in victim impact statements that they felt betrayed and no longer

trusted medical professionals.

The panel heard from a number of witnesses at Phipps' penalty hearing, including his psychiatrist, and they concluded that he was going through a major depressive episode in 2014 when he started showing the naked selfies to patients and staff. He was also struggling with alcohol and having marital difficulties, according to the panel's decision on penalty released this week.

The panel also concluded that Phipps was remorseful for his actions and now has more insight into them.

"The committee recognizes that societal views and tolerance of sexual abuse by physicians have changed," the panel wrote in their 63-page decision.

"The committee views the lengthy suspension, reprimand, and practice restrictions as a very serious penalty that properly reflects societal views and should maintain public confidence in the integrity of the profession and the college's ability to regulate the profession in the public interest."