

Sacramento doctor must surrender medical license in sex abuse complaint | The Sacramento Bee

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The California Medical Board has ordered that Dr. Lenton Joby Morrow, who practiced at a Sacramento psychiatric hospital, surrender his medical license on Nov. 28 after investigating complaints that he had sexually abused one patient and overprescribed drugs to five patients.

Records from the medical board state that Morrow, 40, faced discipline as a result of his work with patients at Heritage Oaks Hospital and at a chemical dependency treatment center called Strategies for Change, which has two locations in Sacramento County. The patients were identified only by their initials.

The state Attorney General's Office, which represented the medical board, did not immediately respond to a query about whether criminal statutes were violated in this case. Neither the Sacramento Police Department nor the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department could find any record of criminal complaints against Morrow in their records Monday.

Medical Board spokesman Carlos Villatoro said the agency has referred cases to law enforcement in the past, but he said he could not comment on whether Morrow's case had been referred because all board investigations are confidential.

McGeorge Law School Professor Michael Vitiello said that the sexual contact with the patient could be prosecuted under Section 729 of the Business and Professions Code, which allows sexual exploitation of a patient to be punished by time in jail and a fine. The most minor offense is basically not even a misdemeanor, he said, but repeated acts become more serious.

"In theory, this would be possibly a criminal charge," Vitiello said. "Chances are not very good that they will be brought.

"Put it this way," he added, "if I'm the attorney involved representing the doctor, I...make a global agreement."

Morrow, whose LinkedIn page notes that he received his medical degree in 2005 from the University of California, Davis, initially saw patient "N.M." at Heritage Oaks in August 2011 after she superficially cut her wrists and legs, the board's documents state. In his second visit with her, Morrow asked her whether she masturbated. After the patient was released from Heritage Oaks in November 2011, the disciplinary documents indicate that she sought treatment from Morrow at a Strategies for Change office.

“Respondent (Morrow) hugged Patient N.M. after appointments,” the records state, “The hugs progressed to a hand on the rear during the hug. Respondent always had an erection during the hugs and Patient N.M. would tell him she noticed. He would tell her he was a doctor and could not cross boundaries.”

On March 17, 2012, Morrow called Patient N.M. and asked her to his office, where he had sexual intercourse with the patient. Patient N.M. said she felt numb and shut down because she had taken marijuana, wine and Klonopin before the visit. While the documents cite other instances of close physical contact, no other instances of sexual intercourse are mentioned.

The medical board also cited Morrow for repeated negligent acts in his treatment of N.M. Among them: He did not clearly delineate his billing to Patient N.M., prescribed benzodiazepines to her despite knowing that she drank two to three bottles of wine a day and failed to treat her alcohol and drug dependence.

In the case of Patient K.I., who had attempted suicide, Morrow prescribed an excessive amount of opiates and did not check state databases to determine whether the patient was getting the same medications from other doctors, documents state. After discovering and documenting that other providers were prescribing opiates to Patient K.I., Morrow told her he would discharge her as a patient if she continued to seek controlled substances from multiple doctors. But he did not.

“Respondent wrote refills without being aware of the amount his patient was taking,” the medical board said. “Respondent’s documentation did not match his actual prescription for controlled substances.”

The medical board cited Morrow for gross negligence and repeated negligent acts in his treatment of Patient K.I. and in three other cases.

Morrow, who was represented by attorney Mitchell Green of San Francisco, received his medical license on or about Sept. 8, 2006, according to medical board records, and that license was in force in the time-frame relevant to the board’s accusations.

In the documents, Morrow signed a statement that he had read the disciplinary order, discussed it with his attorney, understood the ramifications and had voluntarily agreed to be bound by it.

Green did not respond Monday to a request for comment.

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