



Name of Registrant: - Gwendolyn Ringrose

Date of Hearing: - November 21, 2005

Decision

In a hearing held on November 21, 2005, a Panel of the Discipline Committee found Ms. Gwendolyn Ringrose guilty of professional misconduct under paragraphs 30 (failing to reply), 36 (failing to carry out an undertaking), 42 (contravening the legislation) and 47 (unprofessional conduct) of Section 15 of Ontario Regulation 218/94 as amended.

Under the quality assurance regulations, registrants are required to comply with the requirements of the Quality Assurance Program. Those requirements include the following:

- (a) developing and maintaining a professional portfolio,
- (b) during every year participating in continuing quality improvement activities sufficient to indicate that the Registrant continues to have and to apply in her or his dental hygiene practice the knowledge, skills, judgment and attitudes required to practise dental hygiene in compliance with the College's standards of practice and ethics,
- (c) accurately and completely documenting those activities in the Registrant's professional portfolio,
- (d) co-operating with an assessment of her professional portfolio, quality improvement activities and practice to evaluate the Registrant's knowledge, skills, judgment and attitudes, and
- (e) complying with directions for remediation made by the Quality Assurance Committee.

Ms. Ringrose consistently failed to co-operate with the Quality Assurance Committee and with the College as a whole and breached her verbal agreements and formal written undertaking to the College.

The Panel wanted to make clear that compliance with the Quality Assurance Program was a fundamental obligation of the profession. As the Panel had stated in another case, it was not just a matter of a filing requirement, nor is a failure to comply or just a technical breach of the rules. The Quality Assurance Program is very important and strongly connected to safe and effective client/patient care. It is critical that Ms. Ringrose, and all registrants, recognize this connection.

The CDHO's Quality Assurance Program of which the Professional Portfolio is a component, requires the dental hygienist to:

- Reflect upon one's own performance in the provision of patient care
- Identify areas of performance that require improvement
- Develop Continuing Quality Improvement (CQI) activities

The Panel considered that the penalty would serve as a specific deterrent to Ms. Ringrose and as a general deterrent to other registrants of the profession. These requirements are essential to ensure that every dental hygienist maintains and improves her/his level of competence through continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills and judgment.

The fact that the Quality Assurance Committee identified areas of concern requiring remediation clearly indicated the need for Ms. Ringrose to make improvements, not only to comply with legislative requirements but even more importantly to ensure safe and effective patient care.

Aggravating factors in this case included the repeated failure to co-operate with the Quality Assurance Committee, after numerous opportunities to comply, extended over a five year period. Ms. Ringrose breached her verbal agreements and written undertaking to the College,

suggesting a failure to comprehend the connection between continuing quality improvement activities and competent, safe and effective patient care.

The Panel also took into consideration that: a) there was no previous finding of misconduct against Ms. Ringrose by the Discipline Committee, b) she acknowledged her misconduct by pleading guilty and c) that she was going through difficult personal and family circumstances which was offered as an explanation but not a justification for her conduct. While the panel sympathized with her personal problems, it noted that the College was very reasonable and patient in dealing with her over the lengthy period of non-compliance with the Quality Assurance Committee. However, dental hygienists like other health professions must abide by their obligations, even in trying personal times, if they wish to continue to practise. It is important that this message be loud and clear.

Therefore, the Panel accepted a joint submission on order as follows:

1. that the Registrar suspend Ms. Ringrose's certificate of registration to practise for a period of four weeks to commence on a date fixed by the Registrar in January of 2006.
2. that the Registrar suspend one week of the suspension ordered in paragraph 2 and that Ms. Ringrose shall only be required to serve the remaining week of the suspension if she fails to comply with the remainder of this order. If any dispute shall arise between Ms. Ringrose and the College, as to whether she is in breach of a provision of this order, the dispute shall be remanded to a Panel of the Discipline Committee for further adjudication. The parties shall have the opportunity to make full submissions to the Panel before it renders a decision. If, thereafter, the Panel determines that Ms. Ringrose has breached a provision of this order, then and only then shall she be required to serve the remaining week of her suspension, to commence on a date to be fixed by the Registrar of the College.
3. that Ms. Ringrose shall appear before a Panel of the Discipline Committee this day to be reprimanded and the facts of the reprimand shall be recorded in the register.
4. that the Registrar impose the following specified terms, conditions and limitations on the certificate of registration of Ms. Ringrose:

- (i) Successful completion, in the opinion of the Registrar, of an Ethics and Jurisprudence course acceptable to the Registrar, at her own expense, by February 28, 2006.
5. that Ms. Ringrose shall pay the amount of \$3,600.00 in costs to the College at the rate of \$100.00 per month, starting on the 15th day of the first month after completing the first three weeks of her suspension. No interest will accrue on the outstanding amounts so long as they are paid on time. At all times, Ms. Ringrose shall be at liberty to increase the amount of her monthly payment, solely at her discretion.

Ms. Ringrose waived her right of appeal and the reprimand was administered by the Panel.