Psychiatrist hired as chair at University of Alberta resigns amid sex scandal

By: The Canadian Press
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EDMONTON - A psychiatrist facing an allegation that he had sex with a patient in Ontario has resigned from his new job as department chair at the University of Alberta.

Dr. Claudio Soares was hired to head up the university's psychiatry department effective Sept. 1, but was placed on leave before he could start.

The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons is investigating a charge of professional misconduct against him. It's alleged that Soares had a sexual relationship with a female patient between November 2007 and May 2009.

At the time, he was a professor at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont., and also director of the affiliated Women's Health Concerns Clinic at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton.

McMaster announced in June that Soares was moving to Alberta, said university spokeswoman Susan Emigh.

Jo-anne Nugent, a spokeswoman at the University of Alberta, said she couldn't confirm when staff officially hired Soares or when they found out about the allegation against him.

The university's website says he visited the Edmonton campus several times as a candidate for the job and made research presentations as early as January.

Nugent said Soares was placed on leave the same day he was to start as chair. And on Monday he "resigned effective immediately."

Nugent wouldn't say whether the university plans to review its hiring procedures.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario issued a hearing notice about Soares on July 11. On Aug. 7, it sent a public notification to other provinces informing them that Soares was not to be left alone with female patients during its investigation.

Documents also allege that Soares failed to fully co-operate with an investigator from the college.

College spokeswoman Kathryn Clarke said Soares no longer has a licence to practise in Ontario. His certificate of registration expired on Sept. 1 when his academic appointment ended at McMaster.

"Despite the fact that he is no longer licensed, the referral to discipline remains in effect because we have continuing jurisdiction for professional misconduct or incompetence."

She said it may take a couple of months before a hearing date is set.

Kelly Eby, a spokeswoman for the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Alberta, said it's not known if Soares had applied to practise in the province, but he is not currently listed as having a licence or permit.

She said Soares didn't necessarily need one. If his job as chair at the University of Alberta were strictly administrative, a permit would not have been required.
EDMONTON - A psychiatrist recently hired to lead the University of Alberta’s department of psychiatry has resigned.

Dr. Claudio Soares had been on leave from his U of A position since it emerged earlier this month that he was under investigation by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario for allegedly having an inappropriate relationship with a female patient.

Members of the department learned of Soares’ resignation Monday at a meeting hosted by the faculty of medicine and dentistry’s dean, Dr. Douglas Miller, and Dr. Glen Baker, who is taking over as head of the psychiatry department on an interim basis.

In a written statement issued Monday, a spokeswoman for the faculty said that Soares had resigned from his job, effective immediately.

“Dr. Soares was to assume the position of chair on September 1, 2012, but was placed on leave,” spokeswoman Jo-Anne Nugent said in an email Monday.


At the time, Soares was also teaching in the department of psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences at McMaster University.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario oversees the professional conduct of doctors in that province. The college placed a restriction on Soares that he could only see female patients in any jurisdiction if a female health professional was also present. The college also alleged that during its investigation, Soares "failed to provide requested information and/or documentation.”

None of the allegations have been proven.

Soares received a notice of hearing from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on July 11, less than a month after the U of A announced that he was the department’s new chairman. The hearing date has not been set.

The Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons said Soares had not yet been licensed to practise medicine in Alberta.

Nugent said that the faculty could not comment on the details of Soares’ resignation — such as what, if any, compensation, he received — because it is a personnel matter.

Baker, the department’s interim chairman, is currently director of the Neurochemical Research Institute and a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. He previously served as department chairman from 2000 to 2005 and as acting chairman from 2005 to 2006.

With files from Brent Wittmeier

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New U of A professor under cloud
Hired as of Sept. 1, supervisor on leave over allegations

BY SARAH O'DONNELL, EDMONTON JOURNAL  SEPTEMBER 12, 2012

The new head of the University of Alberta's department of psychiatry faces an allegation that he had an inappropriate relationship with a female patient while he was working in Ontario.

According to information posted by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on its website, Dr. Claudio Soares faces allegations of professional misconduct in regards to an alleged sexual relationship with a female patient.

That relationship allegedly included "touching of a sexual nature, behaviour and/or remarks of a sexual nature towards the patient, kissing, fellatio of Dr. Soares by the patient, sexual intercourse with the patient, and/or other forms of physical sexual relations," according to the practice restrictions posted on Soares's profile on the college's website.

"It is alleged that Dr. Soares' behaviour was sexual abuse and would be reasonably be regarded by members of the profession as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional," it said.

Soares's appointment as chairman of the psychiatry department was effective Sept. 1, although Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry spokeswoman Jo-anne Nugent said Tuesday he is currently on leave.

None of the allegations against Soares have been proven.

In a June letter issued by the faculty of medicine and dentistry's interim dean, Verna Yiu, she welcomed Soares from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont., where he held a range of posts, including associate chair man of research in the department of psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences, director of the Women's Health Concerns Clinic and academic head of the Mood and Anxiety Disorders division.

In her letter to faculty and students, Yiu said the awardwinning and well-published doctor focused on mood and anxiety disturbances across the female reproductive life cycle.

"His most recent research interests include mental health issues in female immigrants, and the impact of immigration and perinatal stress on the immune system of the offspring," Yiu wrote.

Nugent said Tuesday in an email that university officials would not speak to the issue beyond a statement emailed to the Journal because it is a personnel matter, which makes it confidential.

"The faculty is aware of matters involving a complaint against Dr. Soares now before The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario," she wrote.

The faculty is determining its next steps, Nugent said.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is a regulatory body that oversees the professional conduct of doctors in the province.

According to the college's restriction imposed on Soares, he cannot be alone with any female patient during a professional encounter.

"Effective immediately, Dr. Soares shall not engage in any professional encounters with female patients of any age, in any jurisdiction, unless the patient encounter takes place in the presence of a female regulated health professional approved by the college," it says.

The college also alleges that Soares failed to co-operate fully with a college investigator.
Accused of misconduct, new U of A psychiatry head not yet licensed to practise in Alberta

BY BRENT WITTMEIER, EDMONTON JOURNAL  SEPTEMBER 12, 2012

EDMONTON - The University of Alberta’s new psychiatry chair has yet to be licensed by the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons, the college said Wednesday.

Dr. Claudio Soares faces allegations that he had an inappropriate sexual relationship with a female patient he saw between November 2007 and May 2009 while working in a Hamilton, Ont. clinic. At the time, Soares was also teaching in the department of psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences at McMaster University.

Soares received a notice of hearing from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on July 11, less than a month after the U of A posted an online announcement of his new position as chairman of the department of psychiatry, slated to take effect Sept. 1.

The notice specifies allegations of sexual touching, oral sex and sexual intercourse. During an investigation, Soares “failed to provide requested information and/or documentation,” the letter notes.

A date for a hearing has not yet been set, college spokeswoman Kathryn Clarke said from Toronto. The allegations haven’t been proven.

As a result of the alleged misconduct, the college imposed restrictions on Aug. 7, stipulating Soares could not be alone with a female patient in any jurisdiction. Notice of the restrictions were sent to regulatory bodies throughout Canada and the United States, including the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons, Clarke said.

Soares has not been licensed to practise medicine in Alberta, Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons spokeswoman Kelly Eby said Wednesday.

Any doctor practising in the province in a medical capacity, including supervising practising physicians, must hold a permit from the college, Eby said.

“Any physician who is either treating patients, teaching students, having any sort of medical interaction with anyone, is required to have a practice permit in Alberta,” she said, stressing that an individual contract can vary.

The specific details of Soares’ contract with the U of A are unknown. Soares is currently on leave, but the university declined to clarify when he went on leave or when the school became aware of the allegations.

Eby said the college’s application process includes verifying the applicant’s education and postgraduate training. It also reviews any disciplinary information available.

“We look at discipline information from Canada and the U.S. and anywhere else we can find it.”

The college also requires a certificate of professional conduct, which outlines any ongoing complaints against an applicant.

More to come …

With files from Mariam Ibrahim

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U of A psychiatry head faces Ontario allegation he had inappropriate relationship with patient

BY SARAH O’DONNELL, EDMONTON JOURNAL  
SEPTEMBER 11, 2012

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