Doc convicted of assault has licence revoked

Hamilton Spectator

A Hamilton doctor who was sentenced to 16 months in jail for sexually assaulting multiple patients had his certificate of registration revoked during a hearing at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario Wednesday.

Dr. Justin Onzuka, 39, was found guilty of an offence relevant to his suitability to practice and was found to be engaged in the sexual abuse of patients. He was also found to have engaged in conduct or acts relevant to the practice of medicine that would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.

Onzuka was ordered to reimburse the College $32,120 to cover the cost if victims seek funding for therapy through the College. Additionally, he must pay the $3,650 cost of Wednesday's hearing. This was the reprimand sought jointly by Dr. Onzuka's counsel and counsel for the College.

The incidents occurred when Onzuka was serving as a medical resident at the Hamilton Health Sciences McMaster site. In 1997, he disrobed one female patient while she was unconscious, videotaped her and sexually abused her. Afterwards he asked her out on a date.

In 2005, Onzuka was the attending physician when another patient was brought into McMaster's emergency department complaining of chest pains due to a crack cocaine addiction. The victim also had a diagnosis of attention deficit disorder.

After her discharge, Onzuka arranged to meet her at her apartment, claiming he was conducting a study on ADD. This claim was false. During their meeting, Onzuka touched the woman's breasts, put on a condom and tried to have sex with her. At the time, she was passing out under the influence of drugs and alcohol, some of which Onzuka provided.

Additional records show Onzuka sexually abused other female patients during his time in medical school and throughout his training.

Onzuka's medical licence was suspended in 2008 following a fitness hearing that found him to be a sex addict. He was found guilty of sexual assault in 2010. He has not practiced as a physician since 2006.

During Wednesday's hearing, Onzuka's counsel Jenny Stephenson read a letter of apology from her client. She also read a letter of support from Garry Glowacki, executive director of the Bridge Prison Ministry. It stated that Glowacki believes Onzuka (who has been involved with Bridge rehabilitation programs) has accepted the consequences of his actions and is seeking to rehabilitate.

The mother of the patient with the crack cocaine addiction also read a letter - her daughter's victim impact statement. The document detailed the difficulty her daughter has had moving forward with her life since 2005.

It was the woman's letter the discipline committee referenced when it announced Onzuka's reprimand. "The panel is appalled by the details disclosed," the reprimand said. "It is hard to imagine a more egregious breach of trust against more vulnerable patients ...We are deeply moved and saddened to learn of the great impact your selfish actions have had on the life of at least one of your victims."

Onzuka refused comment after the hearing. He will be eligible to re-apply for his certificate after a period of five years.
Sexual abuse: College of Physicians revokes licence of Hamilton emergency room doctor

Dr. Justin Fuminori Onzuka admitted to abusing unconscious patients, in one case videotaping the act. Convicted in 2010, he lost his licence Wednesday.

By: Victoria Ptashnick / News reporter. Published on Wed May 22 2013

A Hamilton emergency room doctor lost his licence at a Wednesday disciplinary hearing after admitting he sexually abused unconscious patients — in one case, videotaping the incident.

"Your behavior has sullied your own reputation and reflects poorly on the profession as a whole," a five-member panel of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario said in a written ruling on Dr. Justin Fuminori Onzuka's misconduct.

Onzuka, 39, who hasn't practised medicine since 2006, admitted to sexual abuse, boundary violations and serious professional misconduct that the college called "dishonourable and disgraceful."

He had already pleaded guilty and been convicted of two counts of sexual assault in 2010, receiving a sentence of 16 months, some of which he served in a treatment facility for sex offenders.

At the hearing he did not contest the fact that, while in medical school at McMaster University in the 1990s, he abused female patients by touching them in a sexual manner while they were under anesthesia.

Onzuka also pursued personal relationships with female patients while he was in training, asking them out during or after he had treated them.

While still a student at the Hamilton Health Sciences McMaster site, he disrobed a female patient awaiting surgery while she was unconscious, videotaped her and then sexually abused her. He then asked the patient out on a date after she was discharged from the hospital.

In June 2005, another female patient was brought into the McMaster emergency department for chest pain due to a crack cocaine addiction. After the woman was discharged, Onzuka went to visit her at home, falsely claiming he was meeting her for an Attention Deficit Disorder study. While at her home he provided her with alcohol and drugs, touched her breasts and put on a condom to attempt having sex with her while she was falling asleep or unconscious.

A victim's mother sat in the front row of the hearing, separated only by chairs from Onzuka's parents, who often stared down at their laps.

The mother said her daughter is embarrassed to say she is doing worse than ever since being abused by Onzuka years ago. She finds it difficult to maintain relationships, friendships, or employment because of the severe trust issues she developed after the abuse.

"I don't want to die, but I feel dead already," the victim wrote.

Throughout the hearing, Onzuka appeared emotionless, in a dark suit and cropped hair, playing with his hands.

His lawyer, Jenny Stephenson, read aloud a letter Onzuka wrote saying that he takes full responsibility for his actions, is remorseful, and hopes his victims can move on.

"Words cannot express how deeply sorry I am, but for what it's worth, I am truly sorry," he said in the letter.

The college panel revoked his licence, saying it was appalled at his behaviour, and ordered him to pay $32,000 to the college for the abused patients and the costs of the hearing.

Onzuka will be eligible to apply to the college again in five years.
Ontario doctor convicted of sexually assaulting patients could lose licence

TORONTO — A Hamilton doctor who was sentenced to 16 months in jail in 2011 for sexually assaulting two patients — including one he made a pornographic movie of while she was unconscious— could lose his licence next month, QMI Agency has learned.

Dr. Justin Onzuka, 39, will have a one-day disciplinary committee hearing by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on May 22.

Onzuka’s licence was suspended in 2008 when a fitness hearing found he was a sex addict and had used pharmaceutical drugs.

A discipline panel that finds a doctor has “committed an act of professional misconduct by sexually abusing a patient” shall revoke the doctor’s registration or licence, the college notice of hearing stated.

Onzuka’s sexual misconduct allegedly goes back to his medical school and training days. He graduated in 1999.

“He abused two female patients, while they were under anesthetic; one while she was in the emergency department for a breast abscess and the other while in surgery, draped on the operating room table,” the hearing notice stated.

Onzuka was a medical resident at Hamilton-McMaster hospital in the fall of 1997 when “Patient A” was admitted for surgery. While the patient was unconscious and under his care, he disrobed her and while naked, “videotaped her and sexually abused her by touching her for a sexual purpose,” the college alleged.

“Dr. Onzuka asked Patient A out on a date, which they had after she was discharged from the hospital,” the college alleged.

The victim, who had been videotaped for seven minutes, never knew until police executed a search warrant at Onzuka’s parents’ home in Mississauga where they discovered a tape five years ago.

Onzuka had revealed to a confidential police informant that he had inappropriately touched patients who were under anesthesia — allowing police to move forward with criminal charges.

Search warrants executed at Onzuka’s Mississauga residence, his parents’ home and his vehicle netted a journal where Onzuka logged his inappropriate contacts with patients, identifying with initials and other details, as well as a seven-minute videotape of a sedated, unconscious surgical patient — whom Onzuka had stripped naked in 1997. She was identified by a necklace.

“Patient B,” a crack addict who suffered from attention deficit disorder, was brought into emergency at McMaster in June 1995. Onzuka was the attending physician.

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“Patient B,” a crack addict who suffered from attention deficit disorder, was brought into emergency at McMaster in June 1995. Onzuka was the attending physician.

Shortly after her release, Onzuka visited the patient’s home under the ruse of meeting with her to conduct an ADD study. While she was under the influence of alcohol and drugs, he sexually abused (her).
Doctor convicted of making porn outed by confidential informant: Police

9:03 pm, September 21st, 2012

SAM PAZZANO | QMI AGENCY

TORONTO — It was so sickening that “John” couldn’t keep the ugly truth to himself.

Dr. Justin Onzuka had revealed to John that he had inappropriately touched patients who were under anesthesia.

“John couldn’t keep that secret,” so he reported the disturbing information to us, recalled Sgt. Helena Pereira, the investigating officer at Hamilton Regional Police Force’s sexual assault unit in 2008. John’s identity cannot be revealed because he’s a confidential informant.

“One Dr. Onzuka divulged what he had done, the CI couldn’t sit on this information because it was more important to protect the victims,” Pereira said, Friday.

Search warrants executed at Onzuka’s Mississauga residence, his parents’ home and his vehicle netted two key pieces of evidence.

Police executed the warrants simultaneously because they knew Onzuka was in the process of moving, so he couldn’t bury the incriminating evidence.

One was a journal where Onzuka logged his inappropriate contacts with patients, identifying them only with initials but giving other details. And the second piece was a seven-minute videotape of a sedated, unconscious Crohn’s disease surgical patient whom Onzuka had stripped naked and whose eyelids he had rolled back in the fall of 1997.

“She had no idea this had happened to her, so we brought this to her. She was a normal, traditional European-raised woman,” said Pereira, who uncovered the woman’s identity partly because the woman wore a yarn necklace - signifying good luck from a saint - during the operation.

By checking hospital records, Pereira identified and located the woman, who had also dated Onzuka once after the operation.

Onzuka revealed during a four-hour-long police interview in August 2009 that he was sexually attracted to women either unconscious or with their eyes rolled back and masturbated to the point of injury, Pereira said.

Onzuka, who pleaded guilty to two counts of sexual assault against vulnerable patients in December 2010, was sentenced last year to 16 months - 10 months more than both Crown attorney Brian Adsett and his lawyer Jenny Stephenson jointly proposed.

Justice Marjoh Agro balked at the six months and instead imposed a 16-month penalty in April 2011.

The doctor had “incorporated the victim’s video into a collage of other pornographic images taken from commercial films,” ranging from Three’s Company videos to Japanese films where actresses were either falling asleep or were passed out with their eyes rolled back, said Adsett, who prosecuted him at the criminal trial.

Onzuka is now facing possible revocation of his medical licence as he has been referred to the discipline committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. No date has been set for this hearing.

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SAM PAZZANO | QMI AGENCY

TORONTO — A suspended Hamilton, ON, doctor who was sentenced to 16 months imprisonment for sexually assaulting two patients - including one he made a pornographic movie of while she was unconscious - could soon have his licence revoked by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

A discipline hearing was called for Dr. Justin Onzuka - whose licence was suspended in 2008 when a fitness hearing found he was a sex addict and had used pharmaceutical drugs.

He is now facing disciplinary action for his criminal convictions for sexual assault, sexual abuse of patients and "unprofessional conduct."

Onzuka was a medical resident at Hamilton-McMaster hospital, in the fall of 1997, when Patient A was admitted for surgery.

While Patient A was unconscious and under his care, he disrobed her and while naked, "he videotaped her and sexually abused her by touching her for a sexual purpose," the college alleged.

"Dr. Onzuka asked Patient A out on a date, which they had after she was discharged from the hospital," the college alleged.

The victim, who had been videotaped for seven minutes, never knew until police executed a search warrant at Onzuka's parents' home in Mississauga, ON, where they discovered a tape in 2008.

Onzuka graduated from McMaster University Medical School in 1999 and then specialized in emergency medicine. He's divorced and has one daughter.

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Doctor breached community's trust
Ken Peters
April 2, 2011

Ontario Court Justice Marjoh Agro filled out a judicial pain prescription of her own Friday and it was quite a bit more than the doctor had ordered.

Agro tossed aside a joint Crown and defence submission that former McMaster hospital physician Dr. Justin Onzuka be jailed for six months in connection with sexual assaults on two former patients.

Instead, Agro slapped Onzuka, 37, with a 16-month sentence and two years of probation for his crimes, which include videotaping an unconscious and naked female patient in 1997 as she lay on a hospital gurney. Onzuka incorporated the seven minutes of the footage into a collage of other pornographic images. Police found it at the Mississauga home of his parents.

In a 2005 incident, Onzuka visited a former patient at her west Hamilton apartment. Once there, he plied the woman with alcohol before groping her breast.

Hamilton police Detective Helena Russell said in February she believes Onzuka sexually assaulted 14 to 17 other patients. But because he refers to them obliquely in his seized notes, investigators have no idea of their identity.

"This, frankly, has been a very difficult decision," Agro said after handing down her sentence.

Crown counsel Brian Adsett admitted previously the prosecution was somewhat hamstrung and accepted a "low" joint submission because both complainants were adamant they were too embarrassed and humiliated to testify.

The complainants, both 23, shared the same goal that the accused never again be permitted to practise medicine. Court heard previously that is a likely scenario since Onzuka, whose medical licence has been suspended since 2008, faces upcoming disciplinary hearings before the Ontario College of Physicians.

Agro said she had no power to pull Onzuka's licence. But she pulled no punches in offering a community condemnation of the physician's conduct.

"These offences constitute a profound breach of the patient/physician relationship," she said, noting the breach of trust extended to the profession and a respected Hamilton hospital. But the breach of trust didn't end there.

"This breach of trust extended beyond the profession to the community," Agro continued.

Agro hinted at Onzuka's Feb. 10 hearing that she had concerns with the penalty submissions. Defence lawyer Jenny Stephenson initially sought three to six months; the Crown, six months.

"I find a six-month sentence would bring the administration of justice into disrepute. It is so low," Agro said, adding she came to that determination notwithstanding mitigating factors such as Onzuka having no previous record, pleading guilty, penning an apology letter to the victims and seeking counselling for substance and sex addictions.

Onzuka had little to say when given the chance to address the courtroom, which included one of his victims and the mother of another.

"I just want to say I'm sorry," the divorced father of one said.

Adsett was reluctant to comment on the sentence. "It's a thorough and well-reasoned decision," he said outside of court.

Stephenson was equally circumspect. "Justin and his family are disappointed. This was a joint submission," she said, adding she will await instructions on a possible appeal.
Protect public from Onzuka

February 12, 2011

The case of Dr. Justin Onzuka is indeed a difficult one.

Onzuka, a former McMaster doctor, videotaped a naked and unconscious patient after removing her hospital gown. In December, he pleaded guilty to two charges of sexual assault on two female patients. The video – which Onzuka made in a hospital room as a medical resident at McMaster in 1997 – formed part of the guilty plea. Police suspect there are 14 to 17 additional unknowing victims.

Onzuka will be sentenced April 1. The Crown and defence have made a joint submission on sentencing. That agreement on sentencing was part of a plea deal that saved the two known victims the trauma of having to testify in court.

But the suggested sentence of a maximum six-month jail term for Onzuka seems ridiculously lenient given the nature of the crimes. Onzuka used his position as a medical professional to prey upon vulnerable women who were unable to protect themselves. His behaviour was a heinous abuse of his position of trust. It is shocking.

Ontario Court Justice Marjoh Agro, who will sentence Onzuka, questions whether such a sentence would “bring the administration of justice into disrepute.”

She is wise to wonder about that, because it is difficult to fathom the appropriateness of a lenient punishment for such crimes. But justice is a balancing act and it is often a horrendously difficult one.

As a society, we want criminals to be punished, to “pay” for their transgressions. The general view is that the longer the term of incarceration, the more substantial the punishment for the offender. That simply makes sense.

But to punish the offender, is it reasonable to also punish victims by forcing them to relive their trauma through testifying in open court? Because that’s what would happen if plea deals, which most often include joint submissions on sentencing, were abandoned.

In Onzuka’s case, the Crown has told court the victims’ main priority is to make sure the offender doesn’t practise medicine again. A longer jail term won’t achieve that. Ensuring Onzuka’s name is on the National Sex Offender Registry is a start.

Revoking his licence to practise as a medical doctor is also critical. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario suspended Onzuka’s licence in 2008. His case is expected to be referred for formal disciplinary procedures in the next four months.

Public perception is that the college did not deal harshly enough with disgraced former forensic pathologist Charles Smith. To maintain its credibility as the self-regulating body for doctors in this province, the college would do well to ensure Onzuka’s career in medicine is unequivocally finished. That is the way to protect the public.

Onzuka must not be permitted to prey on patients in the future. Sentencing is only one element of ensuring that.

Lee Prokaska
ER doc charged with sex assault on handicapped patient

John Burman
August 25, 2009

A emergency room physician who trained and practiced in Hamilton has been charged with sexual assaulting a disabled patient and criminal harassment of a classmate at McMaster University.

Dr. Justin Fuminori Onzuka, 36, of Mississauga, was arrested without incident while he was visiting friends in Hamilton Saturday afternoon.

Police allege Onzuka administered "a noxious thing" to incapacitate a disabled female patient in 2005.

Onzuka is not practicing medicine at this time.

He is in custody and will appear in Hamilton court Thursday for a bail hearing.

Detective Helena Russell of the Hamilton police sexual assault unit, said Onzuka, whose specialties included emergency room medicine, worked in all emergency wards at Hamilton Health Sciences hospitals as a resident.

He also worked in Toronto and Mississauga hospital emergency rooms and has taught at children's science camps and several private schools, including Redeemer University College in Ancaster. He has been listed as a part time biology instructor there.

Onzuka was certified to practice in 2004, following graduation from McMaster in 1998 and five-years post graduate training in emergency medicine.

His licence has been under suspension by the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons since May 7, 2008, pending the outcome of a hearing by the college's fitness to practice committee. No date has been set for the hearing.

The reason for that hearing is not available to the public at this time because it pertains to the personal health of a physician facing a fitness hearing, said Kathryn Clarke, spokesperson for the college. Should the fitness committee decide to permanently remove Onzuka's registration, that information could form part of its findings.

Onzuka and his estranged wife have one child.

Russell said the charges followed an intense, week-and-a-half investigation after police received information regarding the historical sexual assaults investigators believe date back to 1994.

The investigation is ongoing and police are hoping to hear from any potential victims.

Onzuka is charged with criminal harassment for allegedly stalking a woman who was a classmate at McMaster.

The remaining charges, which Russell said are allegations of his involvement with a former patient in Hamilton, include sexual assault, administering a noxious thing, sexual exploitation of a person with a disability and breach of trust.

Russell said Onzuka was working in Hamilton hospitals while doing his residency and police will be seeking other potential victims in Toronto because he took courses there as well.

"We have many people yet to talk to," she said. "The investigation is very much ongoing."

Police are also interested in speaking with women who may have had contact with Onzuka through several dating web sites he is listed on.

A profile Onzuka maintains on a professional resumé site lists him as an "award winning clinical educator at McMaster University Medical School with over 10 years experience," and a clinical lecturer at International Medical Graduation, with specialties in emergency medicine, toxicology, airway management and advanced cardiac life support.

The resumé also notes he has taught physicians, nurses and even children eight to 18 in science classes he helped develop at the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto.

Police have asked anyone with information to call Detective Helena Russell at 905-540-5544 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 if they wish to remain anonymous.

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