

STATE OF MAINE  
BOARD OF LICENSURE IN MEDICINE

In re: )  
George E. Northrop, M.D. ) CONSENT AGREEMENT  
Complaint Nos. CR08-379/10-142 )

This document is a Consent Agreement, effective when signed by all parties, that resolves two matters pending before the Board: (1) a complaint - CR 08-379; and (2) the Board's preliminary denial of Dr. Northrop's application for a permanent Maine medical license. This Consent Agreement imposes disciplinary action against the emergency and temporary Maine medical licenses previously held by George E. Northrop, M.D., and resolves a pending application for a permanent Maine medical license. The parties to the Consent Agreement are: George E. Northrop, M.D. ("Dr. Northrop"), the State of Maine Board of Licensure in Medicine ("the Board") and the State of Maine Department of the Attorney General ("the Attorney General"). This Consent Agreement is entered into pursuant to 10 M.R.S. § 8003(5)(B) and 32 M.R.S. § 3282-A.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

1. On February 15, 2008, the Board issued Dr. Northrop an Emergency Maine Medical License, which expired on May 25, 2008. On his application for an emergency medical license, Dr. Northrop affirmatively indicated that he would file an application for a permanent Maine medical license within fourteen (14) days of being issued an emergency medical license.
2. On May 27, 2008, the Board received an application from Dr. Northrop for a permanent Maine medical license. On that application, Dr. Northrop indicated that he had never suffered from "any physical, psychiatric, or addictive disorder that would impair or require limitations" on his functioning as a physician. In addition, Dr. Northrop indicated that his medical specialty was Internal Medicine.
3. On June 9, 2008, the Board issued Dr. Northrop a Temporary Maine Medical License, which expired on December 9, 2008. The Board issued Dr. Northrop the temporary license in order to allow him to continue to practice medicine in Maine while his application for a permanent medical license was being processed.
4. On July 12, 2008, the Board received a letter from the Maine Medical Association Medical Professionals Health Program (MPHP) indicating that Dr. Northrop was a participant in good standing, and had signed a treatment plan contract on June 30, 2008. The letter also indicated that the mission of the MPHP is "to support

professionals in recovery from illness that might impair their ability to practice safely” and indicated that Dr. Northrop would be undergoing counseling and random urine monitoring.

5. On August 21, 2008, the Board staff sent Dr. Northrop a letter updating him on the status of his pending application for a permanent medical license.

6. On Friday, September 12, 2008, the Board received a letter dated September 11, 2008, from the Maine Medical Association MPHP regarding Dr. Northrop. According to that letter, on August 27, 2008, Dr. Northrop submitted a random urine specimen for analysis, which tested positive for Ethyl Glucuronide (ETG), an indicator of alcohol use. In addition, Dr. Northrop admitted to consuming alcohol. According to the letter, the positive test result was posted on the laboratory’s website on September 9, 2008.

7. On Friday, September 12, 2008, at 5:58 p.m. the Board’s Executive Director, Randal Manning, received an e-mail from Dr. Northrop. Attached to the e-mail was a letter from Dr. Northrop dated September 10, 2008, in which Dr. Northrop stated in relevant part:

I have... resigned from my position as Town of North Haven physician to devote my time to restoring my lighthouse here. As I am no longer practicing medicine here, there is no need to maintain the temporary license, nor continue with my application for a permanent license. I therefore withdraw my application for a permanent Maine license at this time...

8. On Friday, September 12, 2008, at 6:33 p.m. the Board staff received an e-mail from Dr. Northrop that stated:

I just wanted to inform you that I have resigned from my position as the Town of North Haven Physician and have no plans to continue practicing in Maine as I’ll now be living in my offshore lighthouse in the Fox Island Thorofare. I’m attaching a copy of my letter to Mr. Manning, but wanted to keep you in the loop so that my temporary Maine license can be canceled effective today and my application for a permanent license is likewise withdrawn.

9. On Monday, September 15, 2008, at 8:04 a.m. the Board’s Executive Director, Randal Manning, sent Dr. Northrop an e-Mail that stated in relevant part:

Dr. Northrop,

I have received your request to withdraw your application for permanent licensure. Your request will be reviewed by the Board at its October meeting.

We also received last week, confidential information which the Board will also review in the near future... I would suggest that it is premature to presume that the board has granted your request to withdraw from application, should you be required to report such status to any entity. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

10. On October 14, 2008, the Board reviewed the foregoing information, and pursuant to 32 M.R.S. § 3282-A, voted to initiate a complaint against Dr. Northrop's temporary Maine medical license based upon alleged habitual substance abuse that was foreseeably likely to result in Dr. Northrop performing services in a manner that endangered the health or safety of patients and unprofessional conduct. The Board docketed the complaint as CR08-379.

11. On December 15, 2008, the Board received a written response from Dr. Northrop to complaint CR08-379. In his response, Dr. Northrop: denied abusing any substances; indicated that he had "obtained Tramadol" from a local pharmacy on the same date that he was given a prescription for Vicoprophen; admitted that he entered the MPHP; denied knowing that he could not consume alcohol; and admitted that he consumed alcohol.

12. On January 12, 2009, the Board reviewed complaint CR08-379. Following its review, the Board voted to offer Dr. Northrop the opportunity to withdraw his application for a permanent Maine medical license while under investigation or undergo a neuropsychiatric and substance abuse evaluation.

13. On March 19, 2009, the Board received a letter from Dr. Northrop's attorney indicating that Dr. Northrop elected to submit to the neuropsychiatric and substance abuse evaluation.

14. On January 5, 2010, the Board received the results of an evaluation conducted of Dr. Northrop at The Farley Center at Williamsburg Place. According to that evaluation, Dr. Northrop was diagnosed with alcohol dependence, opioid dependence, depressive disorder, and anxiety disorder. In addition, according to that evaluation, Dr. Northrop admitted:

- a. "abusing alcohol" at least twice in his life;

- b. He wrote a prescription for Hycodan<sup>1</sup>, a brand of Hydrocodone, for his wife;
- c. He began using the Hycodan syrup himself in March 2009;
- d. By July 2009, a pharmacist noted a pattern and called the state, and Dr. Northrop ended up being visited by law enforcement and surrendering his DEA registration;
- e. Despite his awareness with his problems surrounding alcohol, Dr. Northrop consumed alcohol the day prior to the evaluation;

In addition, according to the evaluation, information from Dr. Northrop's work place indicated that the prescriptions for Hycodan were: in both his wife's name and other relative's/friend's names; in heavy opiate dosages; obtained from multiple pharmacies; and paid for with cash. There was also evidence of Dr. Northrop's deterioration of function in the work place (noncompliance with medical record keeping and other errors), and he was several months overdue in renewing his out of state medical license.

15. On January 10, 2010, the Board reviewed this matter, and voted to take the following action:

- a. Schedule complaint CR09-379 for an adjudicatory hearing; and
- b. Preliminarily deny Dr. Northrop's pending application for a permanent Maine medical license.

16. On March 5, 2010, the Board received a letter from Dr. Northrop's attorney, in which he appealed the Board's decision to preliminarily deny his application for a permanent Maine medical license and requested a hearing.

17. This Consent Agreement been negotiated by legal counsel for Dr. Northrop and legal counsel for the Board in order to resolve complaint CR08-379 and Dr. Northrop's pending application for a permanent Maine medical license (CR10-142) without further proceedings. Absent Dr. Northrop's

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<sup>1</sup> Hydrocodone is a semisynthetic opioid antitussive and analgesic with multiple effects qualitatively similar to those of codeine. In excessive doses, hydrocodone, like other opium derivatives, will depress respiration. Hydrocodone can produce miosis, euphoria, physical and physiological dependence.

GND

acceptance of this Consent Agreement by signing it, dating it, having it notarized, and returning it to Maureen Lathrop, Investigative Secretary, Maine Board of Licensure in Medicine, 137 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0137 on or before November 5, 2010, the Board will schedule the matter for an adjudicatory hearing at a later date.

18. By signing this Consent Agreement, Dr. Northrop waives, in his personal capacity and through legal counsel, any and all objections to, and hereby consents to allow the Board's legal counsel to present this proposed Consent Agreement to the Board for possible ratification on November 9, 2010. Dr. Northrop waives, in his personal capacity and through legal counsel, forever any arguments of bias or otherwise against any of the Board members in the event that the Board ratifies or fails to ratify this proposed Consent Agreement.

#### COVENANTS

19. Dr. Northrop admits, based upon the evidence in possession of the Board that with regard to complaint CR08-379 and his application for a permanent Maine medical license (CR10-142), the Board has sufficient evidence from which it could reasonably conclude that Dr. Northrop:

- a. Engaged in habitual substance abuse that was foreseeably likely to result in his performing services in a manner that endangered the health or safety of patients. Dr. Northrop acknowledges that such conduct constitutes grounds for discipline of his temporary Maine medical license and grounds for the denial of his application for a permanent Maine medical license pursuant to 32 M.R.S. § 3282-A(2)(B);
- b. Engaged in unprofessional conduct by self-prescribing medication (Tramadol) and by obtaining opioid medication (Hycodan) for his personal use by issuing prescriptions in the name of his wife, family, and/or friends. Dr. Northrop acknowledges that such conduct constitutes grounds for discipline of his emergency Maine medical license and for the denial of his application for a permanent Maine medical license pursuant to 32 M.R.S. § 3282-A(2)(F).

#### DISCIPLINE/CONDITIONS OF LICENSURE

20. In light of the admissions in paragraph 19 above, as well as Dr. Northrop's acceptance of responsibility, his efforts to seek treatment and his commitment to refrain from the use of alcohol and other non-prescribed drugs, the Board agrees to impose and Dr. Northrop agrees to:

a. Accept the following discipline imposed upon his emergency and temporary Maine medical licenses:

(1). A Reprimand. Dr. Northrop's self-prescribing controlled medications constituted a violation of the trust placed in him by the Board, and brings discredit upon the practice of medicine. Dr. Northrop henceforth agrees not to self-prescribe any medications.

(2). A civil penalty of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000). Payment of the fine shall be made by certified check or money order made payable to "Treasurer, State of Maine," and be remitted to Maureen Lathrop, Investigative Secretary, Maine Board of Licensure in Medicine, 137 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 0433-0137. Dr. Northrop shall ensure that payment of the fine shall be accomplished by November 9, 2012.

b. Withdraw his appeal of the Board's decision to preliminarily deny his application for a permanent Maine medical license, thereby making the Board's decision to preliminarily deny his pending application final. Nothing in this Consent Agreement shall prevent Dr. Northrop, at reasonable intervals, from re-applying for a permanent Maine medical license. Upon receipt of such an application, the Board may: (1) grant Dr. Northrop's application; (2) Deny Dr. Northrop's application; or (3) Grant Dr. Northrop's application with conditions. Upon the filing of any application for licensure, it shall be Dr. Northrop's burden to demonstrate that he does not pose a danger to the public, and that he can safely return to the practice of medicine in Maine.

21. PUBLIC RECORD. This Consent Agreement is a public record within the meaning of 1 M.R.S. § 402 and will be available for inspection and copying by the public pursuant to 1 M.R.S. § 408.

22. REPORTABLE DISCIPLINE. This Consent Agreement constitutes disciplinary action, and is reportable to the National Practitioner Data Bank, the Federation of State Medical Boards, and other licensing jurisdictions.

23. ADVICE OF COUNSEL. Dr. Northrop has had an opportunity to consult with legal counsel regarding the terms and conditions of this Consent Agreement.

24. WAIVER OF RIGHT TO APPEAL CONSENT AGREEMENT.

Dr. Northrop waives his right to a hearing before the Board or any court regarding all facts, terms and conditions of this Consent Agreement. Dr. Northrop agrees that this Consent Agreement is a final order resolving complaint CR08-379 and his application for a permanent Maine medical

license (CR10-142), and that it is not appealable and is effective until modified or rescinded in writing by the parties hereto.

**I, GEORGE E. NORTHROP, M.D., HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE FOREGOING CONSENT AGREEMENT AND AGREE WITH ITS CONTENTS AND TERMS. I FURTHER UNDERSTAND THAT BY SIGNING THIS CONSENT AGREEMENT, I WAIVE CERTAIN RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO A HEARING BEFORE THE BOARD. I HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH LEGAL COUNSEL REGARDING THIS CONSENT AGREEMENT. I SIGN THIS CONSENT AGREEMENT VOLUNTARILY, WITHOUT ANY THREAT OR PROMISE. I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS CONSENT AGREEMENT CONTAINS THE ENTIRE AGREEMENT AND THERE IS NO OTHER AGREEMENT OF ANY KIND, VERBAL, WRITTEN OR OTHERWISE.**

DATED:

11/2/10

  
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GEORGE E. NORTHROP, M.D.


STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNTY OF FAIRFIELD, S.S.

Personally appeared before me the above-named George E. Northrop, M.D., and swore to the truth of the foregoing based upon his own personal knowledge, or upon information and belief, and so far as upon information and belief, he believes it to be true.


DATED:

7 NOVEMBER 2010

  
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NOTARY PUBLIC/ATTORNEY JURIS 424275  
MY COMMISSION ENDS: DOES NOT EXPIRE  
COMMISSIONER OF SUPERIOR COURT  
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

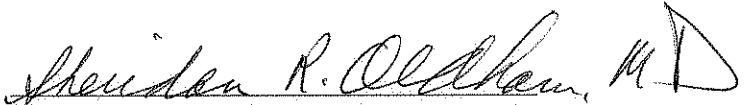
DATED:

11/3/10

  
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WILLIAM B. COTE, ESQ.  
Attorney for Dr. Northrop

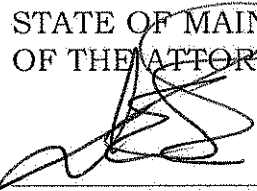
STATE OF MAINE  
BOARD OF LICENSURE IN MEDICINE

DATED: 11/9/10

  
SHERIDAN R. OLDHAM, M.D., Chairman

STATE OF MAINE DEPARTMENT  
OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DATED: 11/9/10

  
DENNIS E. SMITH  
Assistant Attorney General

Effective Date: 11/9/10