

BEFORE THE
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

Sean Michael Owen, M.D.

Physician's & Surgeon's
Certificate No. A 123587

Respondent.

Case No. 800-2019-054639


DECISION

The attached Stipulated Settlement for Public Reprimand and Disciplinary Order is hereby adopted as the Decision and Order of the Medical Board of California, Department of Consumer Affairs, State of California.

This Decision shall become effective at 5:00 p.m. on May 19, 2022.

IT IS SO ORDERED: April 19, 2022.

MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA



Richard E. Thorp, M.D., Chair
Panel B

1 ROB BONTA
Attorney General of California
2 JANE ZACK SIMON
Supervising Deputy Attorney General
3 LYNNE K. DOMBROWSKI
Deputy Attorney General
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7 *Attorneys for Complainant*

8
9 **BEFORE THE**
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
10 **DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS**
11 **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

12 In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

13 **SEAN MICHAEL OWEN, M.D.**
14 **3798 Janes Road, Ste. 6**
Arcata, CA 95521-4745

15 **Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate**
16 **No. A 123587**

17 Respondent.

Case No. 800-2019-054639

OAH No. 2021110087

**STIPULATED SETTLEMENT FOR
PUBLIC REPRIMAND AND
DISCIPLINARY ORDER**

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20 IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGREED by and between the parties to the above-
21 entitled proceedings that the following matters are true:

22 **PARTIES**

23 1. William Prasifka (Complainant) is the Executive Director of the Medical Board of
24 California (Board). He brought this action solely in his official capacity and is represented in this
25 matter by Rob Bonta, Attorney General of the State of California, by Lynne K. Dombrowski,
26 Deputy Attorney General.

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1 CULPABILITY

2 9. Respondent understands and agrees that the charges and allegations in Accusation
3 No. 800-2019-054639, if proven at a hearing, constitute cause for imposing discipline upon his
4 Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate.

5 10. For the purpose of resolving the Accusation without the expense and uncertainty of
6 further proceedings, Respondent agrees that, at a hearing, Complainant could establish a factual
7 basis for the charges in the Accusation of unprofessional conduct pursuant to Business and
8 Professions Code section 2266 and that Respondent hereby gives up his right to contest those
9 charges.

10 11. Respondent agrees that his Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate is subject to
11 discipline and he agrees to be bound by the Board's imposition of discipline as set forth in the
12 Disciplinary Order below.

13 CONTINGENCY

14 12. This stipulation shall be subject to approval by the Medical Board of California.
15 Respondent understands and agrees that counsel for Complainant and the staff of the Medical
16 Board of California may communicate directly with the Board regarding this stipulation and
17 settlement, without notice to or participation by Respondent or his counsel. By signing the
18 stipulation, Respondent understands and agrees that he may not withdraw his agreement or seek
19 to rescind the stipulation prior to the time the Board considers and acts upon it. If the Board fails
20 to adopt this stipulation as its Decision and Order, the Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary
21 Order shall be of no force or effect, except for this paragraph, it shall be inadmissible in any legal
22 action between the parties, and the Board shall not be disqualified from further action by having
23 considered this matter.

24 13. The parties understand and agree that Portable Document Format (PDF) and facsimile
25 copies of this Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order, including PDF and facsimile
26 signatures thereto, shall have the same force and effect as the originals.

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1 this Decision. Respondent shall submit a certification of successful completion to the Board or its
2 designee not later than 15 calendar days after successfully completing the course, or not later than
3 15 calendar days after the effective date of the Decision, whichever is later.

4 3. INVESTIGATION/ENFORCEMENT COST RECOVERY.

5 Respondent is hereby ordered to reimburse the Board its costs of investigation and
6 enforcement in the amount of \$2,500 (two thousand five hundred dollars). Costs shall be payable
7 to the Medical Board of California. Failure to pay such costs shall be considered a violation of
8 probation. Any and all requests for a payment plan shall be submitted in writing by Respondent
9 to the Board. The filing of bankruptcy by Respondent shall not relieve Respondent of the
10 responsibility to repay investigation and enforcement costs.

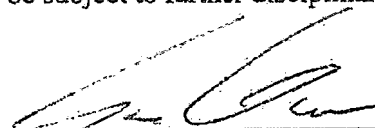
11 4. FUTURE ADMISSIONS CLAUSE.

12 If Respondent should ever apply or reapply for a new license or certification, or petition
13 for reinstatement of a license, by any other health care licensing action agency in the State of
14 California, all of the charges and allegations contained in Accusation No. 800-2019-054639 shall
15 be deemed to be true, correct, and admitted by Respondent for the purpose of any Statement of
16 Issues or any other proceeding seeking to deny or restrict license.

17 ACCEPTANCE


18 I have carefully read the above Stipulated Settlement for Public Reprimand and
19 Disciplinary Order and have fully discussed it with my attorney, Amelia F. Burroughs. I
20 understand the stipulation and the effect it will have on my Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate.
21 I enter into this Stipulated Settlement for Public Reprimand and Disciplinary Order voluntarily,
22 knowingly, and intelligently, and agree to be bound by the Decision and Order of the Medical
23 Board of California. I fully understand that any failure to comply with the terms and conditions
24 of the Disciplinary Order set forth above shall constitute unprofessional conduct and that my
25 Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate will be subject to further disciplinary action.

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27 DATED: 2/10/22


28 SEAN MICHAEL OWEN, M.D.
Respondent

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I have read and fully discussed with Respondent Sean Michael Owen, M.D. the terms and conditions and other matters contained in the Stipulated Settlement for Public Reprimand and Disciplinary Order. I approve its form and content.

DATED: 02.11.2022 
AMELIA F. BURROUGHS
JANSSEN MOLLOY, LLP
Attorney for Respondent.

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ENDORSEMENT

The foregoing Stipulated Settlement for Public Reprimand and Disciplinary Order is hereby respectfully submitted for consideration by the Medical Board of California.

DATED: 2/11/2022

Respectfully submitted,
ROB BONTA
Attorney General of California
JANE ZACK SIMON
Supervising Deputy Attorney General

Lynne K. Dombrowski
LYNNE K. DOMBROWSKI
Deputy Attorney General
Attorneys for Complainant

SF2020401459

Exhibit A

1 XAVIER BECERRA
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2 JANE ZACK SIMON
Supervising Deputy Attorney General
3 LYNNE K. DOMBROWSKI
Deputy Attorney General
4 State Bar No. 128080
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11 **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

12 In the Matter of the Accusation Against:	Case No. 800-2019-054639
13 Sean Michael Owen, M.D.	ACCUSATION
14 3798 Janes Road, Ste 6	
15 Arcata, CA 95521-4745	
16 Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate	
17 No. A 123587,	
Respondent.	

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20 **PARTIES**

21 1. William Prasifka (Complainant) brings this Accusation solely in his official capacity
22 as the Executive Director of the Medical Board of California, Department of Consumer Affairs
23 (Board).

24 2. On or about November 9, 2012, the Medical Board issued Physician's and Surgeon's
25 Certificate Number A 123587 to Sean Michael Owen, M.D. (Respondent). The Physician's and
26 Surgeon's Certificate was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought
27 herein and will expire on February 28, 2022, unless renewed.

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1 **JURISDICTION**

2 3. This Accusation is brought before the Board, under the authority of the following
3 laws. All section references are to the Business and Professions Code (Code) unless otherwise
4 indicated.

5 4. Section 2227 of the Code states:

6 (a) A licensee whose matter has been heard by an administrative law judge of
7 the Medical Quality Hearing Panel as designated in Section 11371 of the Government
8 Code, or whose default has been entered, and who is found guilty, or who has entered
9 into a stipulation for disciplinary action with the board, may, in accordance with the
10 provisions of this chapter:

11 (1) Have his or her license revoked upon order of the board.

12 (2) Have his or her right to practice suspended for a period not to exceed one
13 year upon order of the board.

14 (3) Be placed on probation and be required to pay the costs of probation
15 monitoring upon order of the board.

16 (4) Be publicly reprimanded by the board. The public reprimand may include a
17 requirement that the licensee complete relevant educational courses approved by the
18 board.

19 (5) Have any other action taken in relation to discipline as part of an order of
20 probation, as the board or an administrative law judge may deem proper.

21 (b) Any matter heard pursuant to subdivision (a), except for warning letters,
22 medical review or advisory conferences, professional competency examinations,
23 continuing education activities, and cost reimbursement associated therewith that are
24 agreed to with the board and successfully completed by the licensee, or other matters
25 made confidential or privileged by existing law, is deemed public, and shall be made
26 available to the public by the board pursuant to Section 803.1.

27 5. Section 2228 of the Code states:

28 The authority of the board or the California Board of Podiatric Medicine to
discipline a licensee by placing him or her on probation includes, but is not limited to,
the following:

(a) Requiring the licensee to obtain additional professional training and to pass
an examination upon the completion of the training. The examination may be written
or oral, or both, and may be a practical or clinical examination, or both, at the option
of the board or the administrative law judge.

(b) Requiring the licensee to submit to a complete diagnostic examination by
one or more physicians and surgeons appointed by the board. If an examination is
ordered, the board shall receive and consider any other report of a complete
diagnostic examination given by one or more physicians and surgeons of the
licensee's choice.

1 (c) Restricting or limiting the extent, scope, or type of practice of the licensee,
2 including requiring notice to applicable patients that the licensee is unable to perform
3 the indicated treatment, where appropriate.

4 (d) Providing the option of alternative community service in cases other than
5 violations relating to quality of care.

6 6. Section 2234 of the Code, states:

7 The board shall take action against any licensee who is charged with
8 unprofessional conduct. In addition to other provisions of this article, unprofessional
9 conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

10 (a) Violating or attempting to violate, directly or indirectly, assisting in or
11 abetting the violation of, or conspiring to violate any provision of this chapter.

12 (b) Gross negligence.

13 (c) Repeated negligent acts. To be repeated, there must be two or more
14 negligent acts or omissions. An initial negligent act or omission followed by a
15 separate and distinct departure from the applicable standard of care shall constitute
16 repeated negligent acts.

17 (1) An initial negligent diagnosis followed by an act or omission medically
18 appropriate for that negligent diagnosis of the patient shall constitute a single
19 negligent act.

20 (2) When the standard of care requires a change in the diagnosis, act, or
21 omission that constitutes the negligent act described in paragraph (1), including, but
22 not limited to, a reevaluation of the diagnosis or a change in treatment, and the
23 licensee's conduct departs from the applicable standard of care, each departure
24 constitutes a separate and distinct breach of the standard of care.

25 (d) Incompetence.

26 (e) The commission of any act involving dishonesty or corruption that is
27 substantially related to the qualifications, functions, or duties of a physician and
28 surgeon.

(f) Any action or conduct that would have warranted the denial of a certificate.

(g) The failure by a certificate holder, in the absence of good cause, to attend
and participate in an interview by the board. This subdivision shall only apply to a
certificate holder who is the subject of an investigation by the board.

7. Section 2266 of the Code states: "The failure of a physician and surgeon to maintain
adequate and accurate records relating to the provision of services to their patients constitutes
unprofessional conduct."

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1 **FIRST CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE**

2 **(Unprofessional Conduct re Patient A¹: Gross Negligence and/or Repeated Negligent Acts)**

3 8. Respondent Sean Michael Owen, M.D. is subject to disciplinary action for
4 unprofessional conduct regarding his acts and/or omissions with regard to his treatment and care
5 of Patient A, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 2234, subdivision (b) [gross
6 negligence] and/or subdivision (c) [repeated negligent acts]. The circumstances are as follows:

7 9. On or about March 20, 2019, Patient A, a female born in 1929, was admitted through
8 the emergency room to Mad River Community Hospital (MRCH), presenting with a complaint of
9 swelling and pain in her right wrist and with erythema² in her wrist and mid-forearm area. The
10 patient reported experiencing chills. She had been bitten on her right wrist by a cat two or three
11 days prior. As the on-call physician for orthopedic consultation, Respondent saw and evaluated
12 Patient A and recommended that she be admitted to the hospital. Respondent's diagnosis was
13 acute cellulitis of the right wrist and arm, with a possible abscess in the right wrist. Soft tissue
14 swelling was noted. Respondent recommended and ordered an MRI, which was performed on
15 March 21, 2019 on the left wrist, which results were inconclusive. Respondent also
16 recommended a CAT scan, which apparently was not done.

17 10. On or about March 22, 2019, Respondent, through her daughter, spoke by telephone
18 with Patient A about his plan to perform surgery on March 23, 2019 and to discharge her later
19 that day. Respondent did not document in the patient's records his reasoning for deciding to
20 perform surgery.

21 11. When Patient A arrived at the hospital on March 23, 2019 for the recommended
22 surgical procedure, the surgery was not performed and she was advised to return to the hospital
23 on the following day, which was Sunday, March 24, 2019.

24 12. On March 24, 2019, Patient A returned to the hospital and Respondent performed an
25 irrigation and debridement (including muscle) procedure. Respondent's operative report

26
27 ¹ To protect the privacy rights of the patient, she will be referred to as "Patient A." The
28 patient's name will be provided to Respondent through discovery.

² Erythema is a superficial reddening of the skin as a result of injury or irritation, which
often appears in patches.

1 incorrectly lists that the preoperative and postoperative diagnoses were "Abscess, left wrist."
2 According to Respondent's operative report, the post-operative plan was: "Oral antibiotics 2
3 weeks follow-up with wound care." The patient was provided with outpatient discharge
4 instructions that advised her to call Respondent's office the following day to schedule a post-
5 operative appointment. The discharge instructions sheet also advised that home health care
6 would call the patient to arrange their first visit.

7 13. When Patient A's daughter called Respondent's office on March 25, 2019, she was
8 told by Respondent's medical staff that they were not given instructions that she was to be seen
9 and therefore they could not schedule an appointment. She called again the next day and was
10 given the same response by Respondent's medical office staff except that she was told that the
11 staff person would speak with Respondent and call her back after speaking with him. According
12 to Patient A's daughter, the staff person eventually advised her that Respondent did not need to
13 see Patient A because she did not have an orthopedic problem.

14 14. Patient A's family also learned that the social services/home health care had received
15 her name and treatment diagnosis but without further postoperative instructions or orders from
16 Respondent. In fact, they never received Respondent's post-operative plan or wound care orders,
17 despite multiple attempts to obtain them. Patient A's primary care physician was contacted on
18 March 25, 2019 and, although he was apparently not aware of Respondent's treatment plan or
19 surgical findings, he assumed responsibility and signed orders for home health care for Patient A.

20 15. On or about March 28, 2019, Patient A was seen by a family nurse practitioner who
21 documented an examination showing "a gaping 1 cm wound with purulent discharge 2-cm deep
22 with a slight amount of erythema around the opening with packing in it and some purulence." It
23 was noted that the wound was better and smaller than when it was first seen.

24 16. Respondent's overall conduct, acts and/or omissions, with regard to Patient A as set
25 forth in paragraphs 8 through 15 herein, constitutes unprofessional conduct through gross
26 negligence and/or repeated negligent acts pursuant to Business and Professions Code Section
27 2234, subdivisions (b) and/or (c), and is therefore subject to disciplinary action. More
28 specifically, Respondent is guilty of unprofessional conduct as follows:

1 a. Respondent's operative report is inaccurate and indicates that surgery was performed
2 on the patient's left wrist. It also appears that Respondent incorrectly ordered an MRI on the left
3 wrist when the injury was to the patient's right wrist.

4 b. Respondent has no documentation to explain the delay in performing surgery and
5 why he waited to recommend and schedule surgery related to an infection in an elderly patient.
6 There is also no documentation to explain why the surgery scheduled for March 23, 2019 was
7 canceled after the patient arrived at the hospital and was not performed until March 24, 2019.

8 c. During the surgery, Respondent did not obtain cultures and sensitivities from the
9 infected wound to document the type of organism and determine whether antibiotic therapy was
10 appropriate for treating the infecting organism.

11 d. Respondent failed to provide post-operative care to Patient A. Respondent also failed
12 to monitor and/or to properly instruct the home health care provider as to what post-operative care
13 was required and failed to document and provide his post-operative orders, which conduct
14 constitutes gross negligence, an extreme departure from the standard of care.

15 **SECOND CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE**

16 **(Unprofessional Conduct re Patient A: Failure to Maintain
17 Adequate and Accurate Records)**

18 17. Respondent Sean Michael Owen, M.D. is subject to disciplinary action for
19 unprofessional conduct regarding his failure to maintain adequate and accurate records with
20 regard to his treatment and care of Patient A, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section
21 2266. The allegations in Paragraphs 8 through 16 are incorporated herein as if fully set forth.

22 **PRIOR DISCIPLINARY DECISION**

23 18. To determine the degree of discipline, if any, to be imposed on Respondent Sean
24 Michael Owen, M.D., Complainant alleges that on December 26, 2014, the Board issued a
25 Decision and Order, in a prior disciplinary action titled *In the Matter of the Accusation Against*
26 *Sean Michael Owen, M.D.*, Case Number 800-2014-002368, whereby Respondent's license was
27 revoked, with the revocation stayed, and the license was placed on probation for five years with
28 an effective starting date of January 23, 2015. That Decision is now final and is incorporated by

1 reference as if fully set forth. Respondent's license was subject to the Board's probation at the
2 time of the conduct alleged herein regarding Patient A.

3 **PRAYER**

4 WHEREFORE, Complainant requests that a hearing be held on the matters herein alleged,
5 and that following the hearing, the Medical Board of California issue a decision:

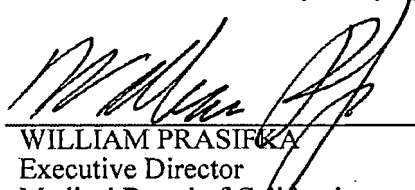
6 1. Revoking or suspending Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate Number A 123587
7 issued to Sean Michael Owen, M.D.;

8 2. Revoking, suspending or denying approval of Sean Michael Owen, M.D. 's authority
9 to supervise physician assistants and advanced practice nurses;

10 3. Ordering Sean Michael Owen, M.D., if placed on probation, to pay the Board the
11 costs of probation monitoring; and

12 4. Taking such other and further action as deemed necessary and proper.

13
14 DATED: MAR 01 2021



WILLIAM PRASIFKA
Executive Director
Medical Board of California
Department of Consumer Affairs
State of California
Complainant

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