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

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:	)	
	)	
	)	
VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D.	)	**Case No. 800-2015-017850**
	)	
Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. A 125140	)	
	)	
Respondent	)	
	)	

DECISION AND ORDER

The attached Stipulated Settlement 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 June 16, 2017.

IT IS SO ORDERED: May 18, 2017.

MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

Jamie Wright, J.D., Chair
Panel A

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

In the Matter of the Accusation Against: **VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D.** **1231 N. Cedar Street** **Glendale, CA 91214** **Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. 125140** Respondent.	Case No. 800-2015-017850 OAH No. 2016090358 **STIPULATED SETTLEMENT AND DISCIPLINARY ORDER**

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

PARTIES

1. Kimberly Kirchmeyer (Complainant) is the Executive Director of the Medical Board of California (Board). She brought this action solely in her official capacity and is represented in this matter by Xavier Becerra, Attorney General of the State of California, by Edward Kim, Deputy Attorney General.

2. Respondent VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D. (Respondent) is represented in this proceeding by attorney Peter R. Osinoff, Esq., whose address is: 355 South Grand Avenue, Suite 1750, Los Angeles, California 90071-1562.

3. On or about April 4, 2013, the Board issued Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. 125140 to VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D. (Respondent). The Physician's and Surgeon's

Certificate was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought in Accusation No. 800-2015-017850, and will expire on February 28, 2019, unless renewed.

JURISDICTION

4. Accusation No. 800-2015-017850 was filed before the Board, and is currently pending against Respondent. The Accusation and all other statutorily required documents were properly served on Respondent on June 30, 2016. Respondent timely filed his Notice of Defense contesting the Accusation.

5. A copy of Accusation No. 800-2015-017850 is attached as exhibit A and incorporated herein by reference.

ADVISEMENT AND WAIVERS

6. Respondent has carefully read, fully discussed with counsel, and understands the charges and allegations in Accusation No. 800-2015-017850. Respondent has also carefully read, fully discussed with counsel, and understands the effects of this Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order.

7. Respondent is fully aware of his legal rights in this matter, including the right to a hearing on the charges and allegations in the Accusation; the right to confront and cross-examine the witnesses against him; the right to present evidence and to testify on his own behalf; the right to the issuance of subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents; the right to reconsideration and court review of an adverse decision; and all other rights accorded by the California Administrative Procedure Act and other applicable laws.

8. Respondent voluntarily, knowingly, and intelligently waives and gives up each and every right set forth above.

CULPABILITY

9. Respondent admits the truth of each and every charge and allegation in Accusation No. 800-2015-017850.

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

CONTINGENCY

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

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

13. In consideration of the foregoing admissions and stipulations, the parties agree that the Board may, without further notice or formal proceeding, issue and enter the following Disciplinary Order:

DISCIPLINARY ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. 125140 issued to Respondent VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D. is revoked. However, the revocation is stayed and Respondent is placed on probation for seven (7) years on the following terms and conditions.

1. ACTUAL SUSPENSION. As part of probation, Respondent is suspended from the practice of medicine for thirty (30 days) after the effective date of this decision.

2. CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES - PARTIAL RESTRICTION. Respondent shall not order, prescribe, dispense, administer, furnish, or possess any controlled substances as defined by the California Uniform Controlled Substances Act ("Act"), except for those drugs listed in Schedules three (III), four (IV), and five (V) of the Act, provided that, in the event that Respondent has complied with all the terms and conditions of set forth in this order, then on the

date that is one year after the effective date of this order, the above restriction on drugs listed on Schedule two (II) of the Act shall cease to be in effect. Respondent shall not issue an oral or written recommendation or approval to a patient or a patient's primary caregiver for the possession or cultivation of marijuana for the personal medical purposes of the patient within the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 11362.5. If Respondent forms the medical opinion, after an appropriate prior examination and medical indication, that a patient's medical condition may benefit from the use of marijuana, Respondent shall so inform the patient and shall refer the patient to another physician who, following an appropriate prior examination and medical indication, may independently issue a medically appropriate recommendation or approval for the possession or cultivation of marijuana for the personal medical purposes of the patient within the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 11362.5. In addition, Respondent shall inform the patient or the patient's primary caregiver that Respondent is prohibited from issuing a recommendation or approval for the possession or cultivation of marijuana for the personal medical purposes of the patient and that the patient or the patient's primary caregiver may not rely on Respondent's statements to legally possess or cultivate marijuana for the personal medical purposes of the patient. Respondent shall fully document in the patient's chart that the patient or the patient's primary caregiver was so informed. Nothing in this condition prohibits Respondent from providing the patient or the patient's primary caregiver information about the possible medical benefits resulting from the use of marijuana.

Respondent shall immediately surrender Respondent's current DEA permit to the Drug Enforcement Administration for cancellation and reapply for a new DEA permit limited to those Schedules authorized by this order. Within 15 calendar days after the effective date of this Decision, Respondent shall submit proof that Respondent has surrendered Respondent's DEA permit to the Drug Enforcement Administration for cancellation and re-issuance. Within 15 calendar days after the effective date of issuance of a new DEA permit, Respondent shall submit a true copy of the permit to the Board or its designee.

3. CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES- MAINTAIN RECORDS AND ACCESS TO RECORDS AND INVENTORIES. Respondent shall maintain a record of all controlled

substances ordered, prescribed, dispensed, administered, or possessed by Respondent, and any recommendation or approval which enables a patient or patient's primary caregiver to possess or cultivate marijuana for the personal medical purposes of the patient within the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 11362.5, during probation, showing all the following: 1) the name and address of patient; 2) the date; 3) the character and quantity of controlled substances involved; and 4) the indications and diagnosis for which the controlled substances were furnished.

Respondent shall keep these records in a separate file or ledger, in chronological order. All records and any inventories of controlled substances shall be available for immediate inspection and copying on the premises by the Board or its designee at all times during business hours and shall be retained for the entire term of probation.

4. CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES - ABSTAIN FROM USE. Respondent shall abstain completely from the personal use or possession of controlled substances as defined in the California Uniform Controlled Substances Act, dangerous drugs as defined by Business and Professions Code section 4022, and any drugs requiring a prescription. This prohibition does not apply to medications lawfully prescribed to Respondent by another practitioner for a bona fide illness or condition.

Within 15 calendar days of receiving any lawfully prescribed medications, Respondent shall notify the Board or its designee of the: issuing practitioner's name, address, and telephone number; medication name, strength, and quantity; and issuing pharmacy name, address, and telephone number.

5. ALCOHOL - ABSTAIN FROM USE. Respondent shall abstain completely from the use of products or beverages containing alcohol.

6. PROFESSIONALISM PROGRAM (ETHICS COURSE. Within 60 calendar days of the effective date of this Decision, Respondent shall enroll in a professionalism program, that meets the requirements of Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 1358. Respondent shall participate in and successfully complete that program. Respondent shall provide any information and documents that the program may deem pertinent. Respondent shall successfully complete the classroom component of the program not later than six (6) months after

Respondent's initial enrollment, and the longitudinal component of the program not later than the time specified by the program, but no later than one (1) year after attending the classroom component. The professionalism program shall be at Respondent's expense and shall be in addition to the Continuing Medical Education (CME) requirements for renewal of licensure.

A professionalism program taken after the acts that gave rise to the charges in the Accusation, but prior to the effective date of the Decision may, in the sole discretion of the Board or its designee, be accepted towards the fulfillment of this condition if the program would have been approved by the Board or its designee had the program been taken after the effective date of this Decision.

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

7. PSYCHOTHERAPY. Within 60 calendar days of the effective date of this Decision, Respondent shall submit to the Board or its designee for prior approval the name and qualifications of a California-licensed board certified psychiatrist or a licensed psychologist who has a doctoral degree in psychology and at least five years of postgraduate experience in the diagnosis and treatment of emotional and mental disorders. Upon approval, Respondent shall undergo and continue psychotherapy treatment, including any modifications to the frequency of psychotherapy, until the Board or its designee deems that no further psychotherapy is necessary.

The psychotherapist shall consider any information provided by the Board or its designee and any other information the psychotherapist deems relevant and shall furnish a written evaluation report to the Board or its designee. Respondent shall cooperate in providing the psychotherapist any information and documents that the psychotherapist may deem pertinent.

Respondent shall have the treating psychotherapist submit quarterly status reports to the Board or its designee. The Board or its designee may require Respondent to undergo psychiatric evaluations by a Board-appointed board certified psychiatrist. If, prior to the completion of probation, Respondent is found to be mentally unfit to resume the practice of medicine without restrictions, the Board shall retain continuing jurisdiction over Respondent's license and the

period of probation shall be extended until the Board determines that Respondent is mentally fit to resume the practice of medicine without restrictions.

Respondent shall pay the cost of all psychotherapy and psychiatric evaluations.

8. MEDICAL EVALUATION AND TREATMENT. Within 30 calendar days of the effective date of this Decision, and on a periodic basis thereafter as may be required by the Board or its designee, Respondent shall undergo a medical evaluation by a Board-appointed physician who shall consider any information provided by the Board or designee and any other information the evaluating physician deems relevant and shall furnish a medical report to the Board or its designee. Respondent shall provide the evaluating physician any information and documentation that the evaluating physician may deem pertinent.

Following the evaluation, Respondent shall comply with all restrictions or conditions recommended by the evaluating physician within 15 calendar days after being notified by the Board or its designee. If Respondent is required by the Board or its designee to undergo medical treatment, Respondent shall within 30 calendar days of the requirement notice, submit to the Board or its designee for prior approval the name and qualifications of a California licensed treating physician of Respondent's choice. Upon approval of the treating physician, Respondent shall within 15 calendar days undertake medical treatment and shall continue such treatment until further notice from the Board or its designee.

The treating physician shall consider any information provided by the Board or its designee or any other information the treating physician may deem pertinent prior to commencement of treatment. Respondent shall have the treating physician submit quarterly reports to the Board or its designee indicating whether or not the Respondent is capable of practicing medicine safely. Respondent shall provide the Board or its designee with any and all medical records pertaining to treatment, the Board or its designee deems necessary.

If, prior to the completion of probation, Respondent is found to be physically incapable of resuming the practice of medicine without restrictions, the Board shall retain continuing jurisdiction over Respondent's license and the period of probation shall be extended until the Board determines that Respondent is physically capable of resuming the practice of medicine

without restrictions. Respondent shall pay the cost of the medical evaluation(s) and treatment.

Respondent shall not engage in the practice of medicine until notified in writing by the Board or its designee of its determination that Respondent is medically fit to practice safely.

9. SOLO PRACTICE PROHIBITION. Respondent is prohibited from engaging in the solo practice of medicine. Prohibited solo practice includes, but is not limited to, a practice where: 1) Respondent merely shares office space with another physician but is not affiliated for purposes of providing patient care, or 2) Respondent is the sole physician practitioner at that location.

If Respondent fails to establish a practice with another physician or secure employment in an appropriate practice setting within 60 calendar days of the effective date of this Decision, Respondent shall receive a notification from the Board or its designee to cease the practice of medicine within three (3) calendar days after being so notified. The Respondent shall not resume practice until an appropriate practice setting is established.

If, during the course of the probation, the Respondent's practice setting changes and the Respondent is no longer practicing in a setting in compliance with this Decision, the Respondent shall notify the Board or its designee within 5 calendar days of the practice setting change. If Respondent fails to establish a practice with another physician or secure employment in an appropriate practice setting within 60 calendar days of the practice setting change, Respondent shall receive a notification from the Board or its designee to cease the practice of medicine within three (3) calendar days after being so notified. The Respondent shall not resume practice until an appropriate practice setting is established.

10. CLINICAL DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATIONS AND REPORTS: Within thirty (30) calendar days of the effective date of this Decision, and on whatever periodic basis thereafter as may be required by the Board or its designee, respondent shall undergo and complete a clinical diagnostic evaluation, including any and all testing deemed necessary, by a Board-appointed board certified physician and surgeon. The examiner shall consider any information provided by the Board or its designee and any other information he or she deems relevant, and shall furnish a written evaluation report to the Board or its designee.

The clinical diagnostic evaluation shall be conducted by a licensed physician and surgeon who holds a valid, unrestricted license, has three (3) years' experience in providing evaluations of physicians and surgeons with substance abuse disorders, and is approved by the Board or its designee. The clinical diagnostic evaluation shall be conducted in accordance with acceptable professional standards for conducting substance abuse clinical diagnostic evaluations. The evaluator shall not have a current or former financial, personal, or business relationship with respondent within the last five (5) years. The evaluator shall provide an objective, unbiased, and independent evaluation. The clinical diagnostic evaluation report shall set forth, in the evaluator's opinion, whether respondent has a substance abuse problem, whether respondent is a threat to himself or herself or others, and recommendations for substance abuse treatment, practice restrictions, or other recommendations related to respondent's rehabilitation and ability to practice safely. If the evaluator determines during the evaluation process that respondent is a threat to himself or herself or others, the evaluator shall notify the Board within twenty-four (24) hours of such a determination.

In formulating his or her opinion as to whether respondent is safe to return to either part-time or full-time practice and what restrictions or recommendations should be imposed, including participation in an inpatient or outpatient treatment program, the evaluator shall consider the following factors: respondent's license type; respondent's history; respondent's documented length of sobriety (i.e., length of time that has elapsed since respondent's last substance use); respondent's scope and pattern of substance abuse; respondent's treatment history, medical history and current medical condition; the nature, duration and severity of respondent's substance abuse problem or problems; and whether respondent is a threat to himself or herself or the public.

For all clinical diagnostic evaluations, a final written report shall be provided to the Board no later than ten (10) days from the date the evaluator is assigned the matter. If the evaluator requests additional information or time to complete the evaluation and report, an extension may be granted, but shall not exceed thirty (30) days from the date the evaluator was originally assigned the matter.

The Board shall review the clinical diagnostic evaluation report within five (5) business

days of receipt to determine whether respondent is safe to return to either part-time or full-time practice and what restrictions or recommendations shall be imposed on respondent based on the recommendations made by the evaluator. Respondent shall not be returned to practice until he or she has at least thirty (30) days of negative biological fluid tests or biological fluid tests indicating that he or she has not used, consumed, ingested, or administered to himself or herself a prohibited substance, as defined in section 1361.51, subdivision (e), of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations.

Clinical diagnostic evaluations conducted prior to the effective date of this Decision shall not be accepted towards the fulfillment of this requirement. The cost of the clinical diagnostic evaluation, including any and all testing deemed necessary by the examiner, the Board or its designee, shall be borne by the licensee.

Respondent shall not engage in the practice of medicine until notified by the Board or its designee that he or she is fit to practice medicine safely. The period of time that respondent is not practicing medicine shall not be counted toward completion of the term of probation. Respondent shall undergo biological fluid testing as required in this Decision at least two (2) times per week while awaiting the notification from the Board if he or she is fit to practice medicine safely.

Respondent shall comply with all restrictions or conditions recommended by the examiner conducting the clinical diagnostic evaluation within fifteen (15) calendar days after being notified by the Board or its designee.

11. NOTICE OF EMPLOYER OR SUPERVISOR INFORMATION. Within seven (7) days of the effective date of this Decision, respondent shall provide to the Board the names, physical addresses, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers of any and all employers and supervisors. Respondent shall also provide specific, written consent for the Board, respondent's worksite monitor, and respondent's employers and supervisors to communicate regarding respondent's work status, performance, and monitoring.

For purposes of this section, "supervisors" shall include the Chief of Staff and Health or Well Being Committee Chair, or equivalent, if applicable, when the respondent has medical staff privileges.

12. BIOLOGICAL FLUID TESTING. Respondent shall immediately submit to biological fluid testing, at respondent's expense, upon request of the Board or its designee. "Biological fluid testing" may include, but is not limited to, urine, blood, breathalyzer, hair follicle testing, or similar drug screening approved by the Board or its designee. Respondent shall make daily contact with the Board or its designee to determine whether biological fluid testing is required. Respondent shall be tested on the date of the notification as directed by the Board or its designee. The Board may order a respondent to undergo a biological fluid test on any day, at any time, including weekends and holidays. Except when testing on a specific date as ordered by the Board or its designee, the scheduling of biological fluid testing shall be done on a random basis. The cost of biological fluid testing shall be borne by the respondent.

During the first year of probation, respondent shall be subject to 52 to 104 random tests. During the second year of probation and for the duration of the probationary term, up to five (5) years, respondent shall be subject to 36 to 104 random tests per year. Only if there has been no positive biological fluid tests in the previous five (5) consecutive years of probation, may testing be reduced to one (1) time per month. Nothing precludes the Board from increasing the number of random tests to the first-year level of frequency for any reason.

Prior to practicing medicine, respondent shall contract with a laboratory or service, approved in advance by the Board or its designee, that will conduct random, unannounced, observed, biological fluid testing and meets all the following standards:

(a) Its specimen collectors are either certified by the Drug and Alcohol Testing Industry Association or have completed the training required to serve as a collector for the United States Department of Transportation.

(b) Its specimen collectors conform to the current United States Department of Transportation Specimen Collection Guidelines

(c) Its testing locations comply with the Urine Specimen Collection Guidelines published by the United States Department of Transportation without regard to the type of test administered.

(d) Its specimen collectors observe the collection of testing specimens.

(e) Its laboratories are certified and accredited by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

(f) Its testing locations shall submit a specimen to a laboratory within one (1) business day of receipt and all specimens collected shall be handled pursuant to chain of custody procedures. The laboratory shall process and analyze the specimens and provide legally defensible test results to the Board within seven (7) business days of receipt of the specimen. The Board will be notified of non-negative results within one (1) business day and will be notified of negative test results within seven (7) business days.

(g) Its testing locations possess all the materials, equipment, and technical expertise necessary in order to test respondent on any day of the week.

(h) Its testing locations are able to scientifically test for urine, blood, and hair specimens for the detection of alcohol and illegal and controlled substances.

(i) It maintains testing sites located throughout California.

(j) It maintains an automated 24-hour toll-free telephone system and/or a secure on-line computer database that allows the respondent to check in daily for testing.

(k) It maintains a secure, HIPAA-compliant website or computer system that allows staff access to drug test results and compliance reporting information that is available 24 hours a day.

(l) It employs or contracts with toxicologists that are licensed physicians and have knowledge of substance abuse disorders and the appropriate medical training to interpret and evaluate laboratory biological fluid test results, medical histories, and any other information relevant to biomedical information.

(m) It will not consider a toxicology screen to be negative if a positive result is obtained while practicing, even if the respondent holds a valid prescription for the substance.

Prior to changing testing locations for any reason, including during vacation or other travel, alternative testing locations must be approved by the Board and meet the requirements above.

The contract shall require that the laboratory directly notify the Board or its designee of non-negative results within one (1) business day and negative test results within seven (7)

business days of the results becoming available. Respondent shall maintain this laboratory or service contract during the period of probation.

A certified copy of any laboratory test result may be received in evidence in any proceedings between the Board and respondent.

If a biological fluid test result indicates respondent has used, consumed, ingested, or administered to himself or herself a prohibited substance, the Board shall order respondent to cease practice and instruct respondent to leave any place of work where respondent is practicing medicine or providing medical services. The Board shall immediately notify all of respondent's employers, supervisors and work monitors, if any, that respondent may not practice medicine or provide medical services while the cease-practice order is in effect.

A biological fluid test will not be considered negative if a positive result is obtained while practicing, even if the practitioner holds a valid prescription for the substance. If no prohibited substance use exists, the Board shall lift the cease-practice order within one (1) business day.

After the issuance of a cease-practice order, the Board shall determine whether the positive biological fluid test is in fact evidence of prohibited substance use by consulting with the specimen collector and the laboratory, communicating with the licensee, his or her treating physician(s), other health care provider, or group facilitator, as applicable.

For purposes of this condition, the terms "biological fluid testing" and "testing" mean the acquisition and chemical analysis of a respondent's urine, blood, breath, or hair.

For purposes of this condition, the term "prohibited substance" means an illegal drug, a lawful drug not prescribed or ordered by an appropriately licensed health care provider for use by respondent and approved by the Board, alcohol, or any other substance the respondent has been instructed by the Board not to use, consume, ingest, or administer to himself or herself.

If the Board confirms that a positive biological fluid test is evidence of use of a prohibited substance, respondent has committed a major violation, as defined in section 1361.52(a), and the Board shall impose any or all of the consequences set forth in section 1361.52(b), in addition to any other terms or conditions the Board determines are necessary for public protection or to enhance respondent's rehabilitation.

13. SUBSTANCE ABUSE SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Decision, respondent shall submit to the Board or its designee, for its prior approval, the name of a substance abuse support group which he or she shall attend for the duration of probation. Respondent shall attend substance abuse support group meetings at least once per week, or as ordered by the Board or its designee. Respondent shall pay all substance abuse support group meeting costs.

The facilitator of the substance abuse support group meeting shall have a minimum of three (3) years experience in the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abuse, and shall be licensed or certified by the state or nationally certified organizations. The facilitator shall not have a current or former financial, personal, or business relationship with respondent within the last five (5) years. Respondent's previous participation in a substance abuse group support meeting led by the same facilitator does not constitute a prohibited current or former financial, personal, or business relationship.

The facilitator shall provide a signed document to the Board or its designee showing respondent's name, the group name, the date and location of the meeting, respondent's attendance, and respondent's level of participation and progress. The facilitator shall report any unexcused absence by respondent from any substance abuse support group meeting to the Board, or its designee, within twenty-four (24) hours of the unexcused absence.

14. WORKSITE MONITOR FOR SUBSTANCE-ABUSING LICENSEE. Within thirty (30) calendar days of the effective date of this Decision, respondent shall submit to the Board or its designee for prior approval as a worksite monitor, the name and qualifications of one or more licensed physician and surgeon, other licensed health care professional if no physician and surgeon is available, or, as approved by the Board or its designee, a person in a position of authority who is capable of monitoring the respondent at work.

The worksite monitor shall not have a current or former financial, personal, or familial relationship with respondent, or any other relationship that could reasonably be expected to compromise the ability of the monitor to render impartial and unbiased reports to the Board or its designee. . If it is impractical for anyone but respondent's employer to serve as the worksite

monitor, this requirement may be waived by the Board or its designee, however, under no circumstances shall respondent's worksite monitor be an employee or supervisee of the licensee.

The worksite monitor shall have an active unrestricted license with no disciplinary action within the last five (5) years, and shall sign an affirmation that he or she has reviewed the terms and conditions of respondent's disciplinary order and agrees to monitor respondent as set forth by the Board or its designee.

Respondent shall pay all worksite monitoring costs.

The worksite monitor shall have face-to-face contact with respondent in the work environment on as frequent a basis as determined by the Board or its designee, but not less than once per week; interview other staff in the office regarding respondent's behavior, if requested by the Board or its designee; and review respondent's work attendance.

The worksite monitor shall verbally report any suspected substance abuse to the Board and respondent's employer or supervisor within one (1) business day of occurrence. If the suspected substance abuse does not occur during the Board's normal business hours, the verbal report shall be made to the Board or its designee within one (1) hour of the next business day. A written report that includes the date, time, and location of the suspected abuse; respondent's actions; and any other information deemed important by the worksite monitor shall be submitted to the Board or its designee within 48 hours of the occurrence.

The worksite monitor shall complete and submit a written report monthly or as directed by the Board or its designee which shall include the following: (1) respondent's name and Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate number; (2) the worksite monitor's name and signature; (3) the worksite monitor's license number, if applicable; (4) the location or location(s) of the worksite; (5) the dates respondent had face-to-face contact with the worksite monitor; (6) the names of worksite staff interviewed, if applicable; (7) a report of respondent's work attendance; (8) any change in respondent's behavior and/or personal habits; and (9) any indicators that can lead to suspected substance abuse by respondent. Respondent shall complete any required consent forms and execute agreements with the approved worksite monitor and the Board, or its designee, authorizing the Board, or its designee, and worksite monitor to exchange information.

If the worksite monitor resigns or is no longer available, respondent shall, within five (5) calendar days of such resignation or unavailability, submit to the Board or its designee, for prior approval, the name and qualifications of a replacement monitor who will be assuming that responsibility within fifteen (15) calendar days. If respondent fails to obtain approval of a replacement monitor within sixty (60) calendar days of the resignation or unavailability of the monitor, respondent shall receive a notification from the Board or its designee to cease the practice of medicine within three (3) calendar days after being so notified. Respondent shall cease the practice of medicine until a replacement monitor is approved and assumes monitoring responsibility.

15. VIOLATION OF PROBATION CONDITION FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSING LICENSEES. Failure to fully comply with any term or condition of probation is a violation of probation.

A. If respondent commits a major violation of probation as defined by section 1361.52, subdivision (a), of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations, the Board shall take one or more of the following actions:

(1) Issue an immediate cease-practice order and order respondent to undergo a clinical diagnostic evaluation to be conducted in accordance with section 1361.5, subdivision (c)(1), of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations, at respondent's expense. The cease-practice order issued by the Board or its designee shall state that respondent must test negative for at least a month of continuous biological fluid testing before being allowed to resume practice. For purposes of the determining the length of time a respondent must test negative while undergoing continuous biological fluid testing following issuance of a cease-practice order, a month is defined as thirty calendar (30) days. Respondent may not resume the practice of medicine until notified in writing by the Board or its designee that he or she may do so.

(2) Increase the frequency of biological fluid testing.

(3) Refer respondent for further disciplinary action, such as suspension, revocation, or other action as determined by the Board or its designee.

B. If respondent commits a minor violation of probation as defined by section 1361.52,

subdivision (c), of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations, the Board shall take one or more of the following actions:

(1) Issue a cease-practice order;

(2) Order practice limitations;

(3) Order or increase supervision of respondent;

(4) Order increased documentation;

(5) Issue a citation and fine, or a warning letter;

(6) Order respondent to undergo a clinical diagnostic evaluation to be conducted in accordance with section 1361.5, subdivision (c)(1), of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations, at respondent's expense;

(7) Take any other action as determined by the Board or its designee.

C. Nothing in this Decision shall be considered a limitation on the Board's authority to revoke respondent's probation if he or she has violated any term or condition of probation. If respondent violates probation in any respect, the Board, after giving respondent notice and the opportunity to be heard, may revoke probation and carry out the disciplinary order that was stayed. If an Accusation, or Petition to Revoke Probation, or an Interim Suspension Order is filed against respondent during probation, the Board shall have continuing jurisdiction until the matter is final, and the period of probation shall be extended until the matter is final.

16. NOTIFICATION. Within seven (7) days of the effective date of this Decision, the Respondent shall provide a true copy of this Decision and Accusation to the Chief of Staff or the Chief Executive Officer at every hospital where privileges or membership are extended to Respondent, at any other facility where Respondent engages in the practice of medicine, including all physician and locum tenens registries or other similar agencies, and to the Chief Executive Officer at every insurance carrier which extends malpractice insurance coverage to Respondent. Respondent shall submit proof of compliance to the Board or its designee within 15 calendar days.

This condition shall apply to any change(s) in hospitals, other facilities or insurance carrier.

17. SUPERVISION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND ADVANCED PRACTICE

NURSES. During probation, Respondent is prohibited from supervising physician assistants and advanced practice nurses.

18. OBEY ALL LAWS. Respondent shall obey all federal, state and local laws, all rules governing the practice of medicine in California and remain in full compliance with any court ordered criminal probation, payments, and other orders.

19. QUARTERLY DECLARATIONS. Respondent shall submit quarterly declarations under penalty of perjury on forms provided by the Board, stating whether there has been compliance with all the conditions of probation.

Respondent shall submit quarterly declarations not later than 10 calendar days after the end of the preceding quarter.

20. GENERAL PROBATION REQUIREMENTS.

Compliance with Probation Unit

Respondent shall comply with the Board's probation unit.

Address Changes

Respondent shall, at all times, keep the Board informed of Respondent's business and residence addresses, email address (if available), and telephone number. Changes of such addresses shall be immediately communicated in writing to the Board or its designee. Under no circumstances shall a post office box serve as an address of record, except as allowed by Business and Professions Code section 2021(b).

Place of Practice

Respondent shall not engage in the practice of medicine in Respondent's or patient's place of residence, unless the patient resides in a skilled nursing facility or other similar licensed facility.

License Renewal

Respondent shall maintain a current and renewed California physician's and surgeon's license.

Travel or Residence Outside California

Respondent shall immediately inform the Board or its designee, in writing, of travel to any

areas outside the jurisdiction of California which lasts, or is contemplated to last, more than thirty (30) calendar days.

In the event Respondent should leave the State of California to reside or to practice Respondent shall notify the Board or its designee in writing 30 calendar days prior to the dates of departure and return.

21. INTERVIEW WITH THE BOARD OR ITS DESIGNEE. Respondent shall be available in person upon request for interviews either at Respondent's place of business or at the probation unit office, with or without prior notice throughout the term of probation.

22. NON-PRACTICE WHILE ON PROBATION. Respondent shall notify the Board or its designee in writing within 15 calendar days of any periods of non-practice lasting more than 30 calendar days and within 15 calendar days of Respondent's return to practice. Non-practice is defined as any period of time Respondent is not practicing medicine as defined in Business and Professions Code sections 2051 and 2052 for at least 40 hours in a calendar month in direct patient care, clinical activity or teaching, or other activity as approved by the Board. If respondent resides in California and is considered to be in non-practice, respondent shall comply with all terms and conditions of probation. All time spent in an intensive training program which has been approved by the Board or its designee shall not be considered non-practice and does not relieve respondent from complying with all the terms and conditions of probation. Practicing medicine in another state of the United States or Federal jurisdiction while on probation with the medical licensing authority of that state or jurisdiction shall not be considered non-practice. A Board-ordered suspension of practice shall not be considered as a period of non-practice.

In the event Respondent's period of non-practice while on probation exceeds 18 calendar months, Respondent shall successfully complete the Federation of State Medical Board's Special Purpose Examination, or, at the Board's discretion, a clinical competence assessment program that meets the criteria of Condition 18 of the current version of the Board's "Manual of Model Disciplinary Orders and Disciplinary Guidelines" prior to resuming the practice of medicine.

Respondent's period of non-practice while on probation shall not exceed two (2) years.

Periods of non-practice will not apply to the reduction of the probationary term.

Periods of non-practice for a respondent residing outside of California, will relieve Respondent of the responsibility to comply with the probationary terms and conditions with the exception of this condition and the following terms and conditions of probation: Obey All Laws; General Probation Requirements; Quarterly Declarations; Abstain from the Use of Alcohol and/or Controlled Substances; and Biological Fluid Testing.

23. COMPLETION OF PROBATION. Respondent shall comply with all financial obligations (e.g., restitution, probation costs) not later than 120 calendar days prior to the completion of probation. Upon successful completion of probation, Respondent's certificate shall be fully restored.

24. VIOLATION OF PROBATION. Failure to fully comply with any term or condition of probation is a violation of probation. If Respondent violates probation in any respect, the Board, after giving Respondent notice and the opportunity to be heard, may revoke probation and carry out the disciplinary order that was stayed. If an Accusation, or Petition to Revoke Probation, or an Interim Suspension Order is filed against Respondent during probation, the Board shall have continuing jurisdiction until the matter is final, and the period of probation shall be extended until the matter is final.

25. LICENSE SURRENDER. Following the effective date of this Decision, if Respondent ceases practicing due to retirement or health reasons or is otherwise unable to satisfy the terms and conditions of probation, Respondent may request to surrender his or her license. The Board reserves the right to evaluate Respondent's request and to exercise its discretion in determining whether or not to grant the request, or to take any other action deemed appropriate and reasonable under the circumstances. Upon formal acceptance of the surrender, Respondent shall within 15 calendar days deliver Respondent's wallet and wall certificate to the Board or its designee and Respondent shall no longer practice medicine. Respondent will no longer be subject to the terms and conditions of probation. If Respondent re-applies for a medical license, the application shall be treated as a petition for reinstatement of a revoked certificate.

26. PROBATION MONITORING COSTS. Respondent shall pay the costs associated with probation monitoring each and every year of probation, as designated by the Board, which

may be adjusted on an annual basis. Such costs shall be payable to the Medical Board of California and delivered to the Board or its designee no later than January 31 of each calendar year.

ACCEPTANCE

I have carefully read the above Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order and have fully discussed it with my attorney, Peter R. Osinoff, Esq.. I understand the stipulation and the effect it will have on my Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate. I enter into this Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order voluntarily, knowingly, and intelligently, and agree to be bound by the Decision and Order of the Medical Board of California.

DATED: February 23, 2017

VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D.
Respondent

I have read and fully discussed with Respondent VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D. the terms and conditions and other matters contained in the above Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order. I approve its form and content.

DATED: 2/23/17

PETER R. OSINOFF, ESQ.
Attorney for Respondent

ENDORSEMENT

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

Dated:

Respectfully submitted,

XAVIER BECERRA
Attorney General of California
E. A. JONES III
Supervising Deputy Attorney General

EDWARD KIM
Deputy Attorney General
Attorneys for Complainant

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DATED: _____ _____
VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D.
Respondent

I have read and fully discussed with Respondent VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D. the terms and conditions and other matters contained in the above Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order. I approve its form and content.

DATED: _____ _____
PETER R. OSINOFF, ESQ.
Attorney for Respondent

ENDORSEMENT

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

Dated: 2/24/17

Respectfully submitted,

XAVIER BECERRA
Attorney General of California
E. A. JONES III
Supervising Deputy Attorney General

EDWARD KIM
Deputy Attorney General
Attorneys for Complainant

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Exhibit A

Accusation No. 800-2015-017850

KAMALA D. HARRIS
Attorney General of California
E. A. JONES III
Supervising Deputy Attorney General
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Attorneys for Complainant

FILED
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
SACRAMENTO June 30 20 16
BY _____ ANALYST

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

In the Matter of the Accusation Against: **VAHE MICHAEL AZARIAN, M.D.** **1231 N. Cedar Street** **Glendale, CA 91207-1426** Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. A-125140 Respondent.	Case No. 800-2015-017850 **ACCUSATION**

Complainant alleges:

PARTIES

1. Kimberly Kirchmeyer (Complainant) brings this Accusation solely in her official capacity as the Executive Director of the Medical Board of California, Department of Consumer Affairs.

2. On or about April 4, 2013, the Medical Board of California issued Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate Number A-125140 to Vahe Michael Azarian, M.D. (Respondent). The Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought herein and will expire on February 28, 2017, unless renewed.

JURISDICTION

3. This Accusation is brought before the Medical Board of California (Board), Department of Consumer Affairs, under the authority of the following laws. All section

references are to the Business and Professions Code unless otherwise indicated.

4. Section 2227 of the Code provides that a licensee who is found guilty under the Medical Practice Act may have his or her license revoked, suspended for a period not to exceed one year, placed on probation and required to pay the costs of probation monitoring, or such other action taken in relation to discipline as the Board deems proper.

5. Section 2234 of the Code, states:

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

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

"(b) Gross negligence.

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

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

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

"(d) Incompetence.

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

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

"(g) The practice of medicine from this state into another state or country without meeting the legal requirements of that state or country for the practice of medicine. Section 2314 shall not

apply to this subdivision. This subdivision shall become operative upon the implementation of the proposed registration program described in Section 2052.5.

"(h) The repeated 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."

6. Section 2239 of the Code states:

"(a) The use or prescribing for or administering to himself or herself, of any controlled substance; or the use of any of the dangerous drugs specified in Section 4022, or of alcoholic beverages, to the extent, or in such a manner as to be dangerous or injurious to the licensee, or to any other person or to the public, or to the extent that such use impairs the ability of the licensee to practice medicine safely or more than one misdemeanor or any felony involving the use, consumption, or self-administration of any of the substances referred to in this section, or any combination thereof, constitutes unprofessional conduct. The record of the conviction is conclusive evidence of such unprofessional conduct.

"(b) A plea or verdict of guilty or a conviction following a plea of nolo contendere is deemed to be a conviction within the meaning of this section. The Division of Medical Quality[1] may order discipline of the licensee in accordance with Section 2227 or the Division of Licensing may order the denial of the license when the time for appeal has elapsed or the judgment of conviction has been affirmed on appeal or when an order granting probation is made suspending imposition of sentence, irrespective of a subsequent order under the provisions of Section 1203.4 of the Penal Code allowing such person to withdraw his or her plea of guilty and to enter a plea of not guilty, or setting aside the verdict of guilty, or dismissing the accusation, complaint, information, or indictment."

7. Section 822 of the Code, states:

"If a licensing agency determines that its licentiate's ability to practice his or her profession safely is impaired because the licentiate is mentally ill, or physically ill affecting competency, the

[1] Pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 2002, "Division of Medical Quality" or "Division" shall be deemed to refer to the Medical Board of California.

licensing agency may take action by any one of the following methods:

"(a) Revoking the licentiate's certificate or license.

"(b) Suspending the licentiate's right to practice.

"(c) Placing the licentiate on probation.

"(d) Taking such other action in relation to the licentiate as the licensing agency in its discretion deems proper.

"The licensing agency shall not reinstate a revoked or suspended certificate or license until it has received competent evidence of the absence or control of the condition which caused its action and until it is satisfied that with due regard for the public health and safety the person's right to practice his or her profession may be safely reinstated."

8. Section 2238 of the Code states:

"A violation of any federal statute or federal regulation or any of the statutes or regulations of this state regulating dangerous drugs or controlled substances constitutes unprofessional conduct."

9. Section 11170 of the Health and Safety Code states:

"No person shall prescribe, administer, or furnish a controlled substance for himself."

10. Section 11370.1. of the Health and Safety Code states:

"(a) Notwithstanding Section 11350 or 11377 or any other provision of law, every person who unlawfully possesses any amount of a substance containing cocaine base, a substance containing cocaine, a substance containing heroin, a substance containing methamphetamine, a crystalline substance containing phencyclidine, a liquid substance containing phencyclidine, plant material containing phencyclidine, or a hand-rolled cigarette treated with phencyclidine while armed with a loaded, operable firearm is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years. As used in this subdivision, "armed with" means having available for immediate offensive or defensive use.

"(b) Any person who is convicted under this section shall be ineligible for diversion or deferred entry of judgment under Chapter 2.5 (commencing with Section 1000) of Title 6 of Part 2 of the Penal Code."

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

11. Respondent suffers from drug addiction and has a history of alcohol and illicit drug use. He began drinking alcoholic beverages when he was 15, increased his drinking during college and thereafter during medical school (when he tried marijuana and also started using cocaine). Over the years, Respondent illicitly obtained and used cocaine, methamphetamine, GHB, and benzodiazepines, among other drugs. During his residency, Respondent tested positive for drug use after his supervisors raised concerns about his behavior and performance during the residency program in Internal Medicine at Olive View – University of California, Los Angeles. Although he entered a drug rehabilitation program and returned to his residency, eventually his residency at U.C.L.A. was terminated due to his failure to comply with the terms of his monitoring agreement. Respondent suffered at least two syncopal episodes at work. On November 22, 2015, Respondent was taken to the emergency room after passing out at work at an urgent care clinic. Respondent also had a urine toxicology screen that was positive for amphetamines. On February 7, 2016, Respondent collapsed at the downtown Urgent Care Clinic, but refused transportation and medical treatment. In March 2016, Respondent tested positive for methamphetamines, during a time period while he was employed to work at an urgent care clinic.

INTERVIEW

12. On or about April 11, 2016, an investigator with the Department of Consumer Affairs interviewed Respondent. He admitted to being a drug addict with a history of alcohol abuse and illicit drug use. He admitted he illicitly uses cocaine and methamphetamine.

PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION

13. On or about April 18, 2016, Dr. M.K., a board certified psychiatrist chosen by the Board to evaluate Respondent, met with Respondent. Based upon his evaluation, Dr. M.K. concluded that Respondent is significantly impaired and suffers from drug addiction with a history of alcohol abuse and illicit drug use. He told Dr. M.K. that he sometimes purposefully took too many drugs in order to produce a seizure. In summary, Dr. M.K. concluded that Respondent suffers from a long history of severe polysubstance drug abuse and cannot safely practice medicine.

PHYSICAL EVALUATION

14. In or around April 19, 2016, Respondent met with J.G., M.D., who is board certified in Internal Medicine and Addiction Medicine. According to Dr. J.G., it would be virtually impossible for Respondent to maintain sobriety and stop his inappropriate behavior unless his underlying medical conditions are addressed and treated.

INTERIM SUSPENSION ORDER

15. On or about June 14, 2016, an interim suspension order was issued restricting Respondent from practicing medicine during the pendency of this action unless certain conditions were satisfied, including undergoing a psychiatric evaluation, abstaining from the use of controlled substances and alcohol, undergoing biological fluid testing and psychotherapy and being restricted from the solo practice of medicine.

FIRST CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

(Unable to Practice Safely Due to Mental/Physical Disorder)

16. Respondent is subject to discipline pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 822 in that his ability to practice medicine safely is impaired because he is mentally and/or physically ill in a manner affecting competency. The circumstances of Respondent's illnesses are as follows:

17. The allegations in paragraphs 12 through 15, inclusive, above are incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth.

SECOND CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

(Dangerous Use of and Self Use of Controlled Substances)

18. Respondent is subject to disciplinary action under section 2239 of the Code, in that he used, prescribed, or administered to himself a controlled substance and/or alcoholic beverages, to the extent, or in such a manner as to be dangerous or injurious to himself, or to any other person or to the public, and/or to an extent that such use impaired his ability to practice medicine safely. The circumstances are as follows:

19. The allegations of the First Cause for Discipline are incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth.

THIRD CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

(Violation of Drug Statute)

20. Respondent is subject to disciplinary action under section 2238 of the Code and sections 11170 and 11370.1 of the Health and Safety Code in that Respondent administered a controlled substance to himself and unlawfully possessed a controlled substance. The circumstances are as follows:

21. The allegations of the First and Second Causes for Discipline are incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth.

FOURTH CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

(General Unprofessional Conduct)

22. Respondent is subject to disciplinary action under section 2234 of the Code, generally, in that he committed unprofessional conduct. The circumstances are as follows:

23. The allegations of the First, Second and Third Causes for Discipline are incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth.

///

PRAYER

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

1. Revoking or suspending Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate Number A-125140, issued to Vahe Michael Azarian, M.D.;

2. Revoking, suspending or denying approval of Vahe Michael Azarian, M.D.'s authority to supervise physician assistants, pursuant to section 3527 of the Code;

3. Ordering Vahe Michael Azarian, M.D. to pay the Medical Board of California, if placed on probation, the costs of probation monitoring; and

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

DATED: June 30, 2016

KIMBERLY KIRCHMEYER
Executive Director
Medical Board of California
Department of Consumer Affairs
State of California
Complainant

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