

LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

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No. 15-I-812

IN THE MATTER OF:

BENJAMIN J. PALOMBO, M.D.
(Certificate No.204031)

CONSENT ORDER

The above-entitled matter was docketed for investigation by the Investigating Officer of the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (the "Board"). Benjamin J. Palombo, M.D. ("Dr. Palombo") is a physician who at all times pertinent has been licensed and engaged in the practice of medicine in and around Pineville, Louisiana.

Dr. Palombo came to the Board's attention when information was received indicating that Dr. Palombo, who has a history of chemical dependency in remission, had a return to use. Dr. Palombo subsequently entered and successfully completed treatment at a Board approved treatment facility. At the completion of his treatment, Dr. Palombo was provided with recommendations which included, among other conditions, execution of a monitoring agreement with the Physicians' Health Foundation of Louisiana Inc.'s Physicians' Health Program (the "PHP"), attendance at specified meetings and counseling. Provided that he adheres to their recommendations, it is the opinion of his treating professionals that Dr. Palombo is capable of returning to the practice of medicine with reasonable skill and safety to patients.

As evidenced by his subscription to this Order, Dr. Palombo acknowledges the substantial accuracy of the forgoing information and that such acknowledgment and the reported information would provide the Investigating Officer ("I/O") assigned to this matter by the Board with probable cause to pursue administrative proceedings against him for violation of the Louisiana Medical Practice Act, La. Rev. Stat. §37:1285 (A) (5), and

(25)¹, constituting sufficient cause for action against his license to practice medicine in the State of Louisiana. On the basis of apparently reliable information, however, the Board is persuaded that the condition from which Dr. Palombo suffers may be susceptible to effective medical treatment, resulting in the maintenance of his capacity to engage in the practice of medicine with reasonable skill and safety to patients, provided that he strictly observes and complies with appropriate conditions to maintenance of his medical license. In consideration of these findings, accordingly, and on the recommendation of the I/O respecting the pending investigation, the Board has concluded that its responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of this state against the unprofessional, unqualified and unsafe practice of medicine, La. Rev. Stat. §37:1261, will be effectively served by entry of the Order set forth hereinafter by consent.

Recognizing his right to written notification of any charges that may be asserted against him as a result of this investigation, as well as the right to administrative adjudication of such charges, at which time he would be entitled to be represented by legal counsel, to call witnesses and to present evidence in defense or in mitigation of the charges made and to a decision thereon by the Board based upon written findings of fact and conclusions of law, pursuant to La. Rev. Stat. §§49:951 et seq. Dr. Palombo, nonetheless, hereby waives his rights to notice, formal adjudication and written decision and, pursuant to La. Rev. Stat. §49:955(D), consents to entry of the Order set forth hereinafter. Furthermore, Dr. Palombo acknowledges that he hereby waives any right to which he may be entitled pursuant to the Louisiana Administrative Procedure Act, La. Rev. Stat. §§49:951 et seq., or to which he otherwise may be afforded by any law to contest his agreement to or the force and effect of the Board's investigation or this document in any court or other forum. By his subscription hereto, Dr. Palombo also hereby authorizes the I/O, to present this Consent Order to the Board for its consideration and to fully disclose to and discuss with the Board the nature and results of the investigation and he waives any objection to such disclosures under La. Rev. Stat. §49:960. Dr. Palombo expressly acknowledges that the disclosure of such information to the Board by the I/O shall be without prejudice to the I/O's authority to proceed with the filing and adjudication of any administrative charges that may subsequently be filed in this matter against him, or to the Board's capacity to adjudicate such complaint should the Board decline to approve this Consent Order. Accordingly, in consideration of the forgoing and pursuant to the authority vested in the Board by La. Rev. Stat. §49:955(D);

¹ The Board may take action against the license of a physician as a result of La. Rev. Stat. §37:1285A: (5) '[H]abitual or recurring abuse of drugs, including alcohol, which affect the central nervous system and which are capable of inducing physiological or psychological dependence;' and (25) '[I]nability to practice medicine with reasonable skill or safety to patients because of mental illness or deficiency; physical illness, including but not limited to deterioration through the aging process or loss of motor skills; and/or excessive use or abuse of drugs, including alcohol';

IT IS ORDERED that the license of Benjamin J. Palombo, M.D. to engage in the practice of medicine in the State of Louisiana, as evidenced by Certificate No. 204031, be and the same is hereby, placed **ON PROBATION** for a period of three (3) years (the "probationary period") *provided, however*, that Dr. Palombo's continuing exercise of rights and privileges granted thereby, shall be conditioned upon and subject to his acceptance of and strict compliance with the following terms and conditions:

(1) Maintenance of Complete Abstinence. Dr. Palombo shall maintain complete and total abstinence from the use of alcohol, controlled and any other mood-altering substance for as long as he holds a license to practice medicine in this state, except as may be prescribed by a treating physician other than himself for a *bona fide* medical condition. Dr. Palombo shall personally inform the PHP and the Board's Compliance Officer, both orally and in writing, within forty-eight (48) hours of the prescription or administration of any controlled or mood-altering substance received by him from any physician for treatment of a *bona fide* medical condition. If the prescription is from another physician, he shall also inform his treating/monitoring physician in the same manner.

(2) Continuing Treatment, Participation in the PHP/Reports to Board. Dr. Palombo shall enter into and execute a monitoring agreement with the PHP. Dr. Palombo shall continue in, abide by and strictly adhere to all recommendations for ongoing treatment and monitoring of his condition, which have or may be contained in his PHP monitoring agreement, or any subsequent agreement which may be recommended by the PHP, as well as those recommended by his treating physicians and those prescribed by any other health care provider involved in his care to the extent that they continue to follow him. Dr. Palombo shall, in addition, authorize and cause his treating and monitoring physicians and/or the PHP to submit to the Board, not less frequently than quarterly throughout the probationary period, written reports and/or verbal reports, should the Board desire the latter, on his then-current treatment, diagnosis, prognosis, course of treatment, maintenance of abstinence from controlled and mood-altering substances, his fitness and ability to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety to patients, and his compliance with the terms, conditions and restrictions of this Order and his PHP monitoring agreement.

(3) Board Access to Treatment Records and Reports. Dr. Palombo shall, and does by his subscription hereto, authorize any physician or any institution at which he undergoes treatment for alcohol or other chemical abuse or dependency from which he may suffer or be diagnosed, as well as any physician under whose care he may come at such an institution who has or may hereafter evaluate, diagnose, treat or monitor him, to provide the Board with copies of all medical reports relating to Dr. Dr. Palombo's history, examination, evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and prognosis and to provide the Board with written and verbal reports relative thereto. Dr. Palombo expressly waives any privilege

that may otherwise be afforded the disclosure of such records pursuant to state or federal law and shall immediately execute any authorization or release that may be necessary to permit the Board access to such records.

(4) Treatment of Self/Family Members Prohibited. Except as may be necessitated by an emergency or life threatening medical condition, Dr. Palombo shall not, for the remainder of his career, undertake to treat, dispense, prescribe or administer any medication, nor render any medical care to any member of his immediate family. In addition, Dr. Palombo shall arrange for other physicians to attend to his own health care needs.

(5) Board Approval of Medical Practice. Following the effective date of this Order and for the duration of the probationary period, Dr. Palombo shall provide the Board with information including a complete and accurate description, and such further information as the Board may request, concerning any practice setting in which he intends to practice Medicine. Dr. Palombo shall not engage in the practice of medicine in any practice setting in advance of the Board's specific written approval of such practice setting.

(6) Attendance at Approved Seminar/Course on Professionalism and Medical Ethics. Prior to returning to the practice of medicine, Dr. Palombo shall provide written confirmation that he has attended and successfully completed one or more courses of study, acceptable to and pre-approved in writing by the Board, in the area of appropriate medical boundaries, professionalism and medical ethics. All courses required by this provision shall be comprehensive in nature (greater than 20 credit hours) and shall be acceptable to and pre-approved in writing by the Board or its designee.

(7) Continuing Medical Education. Dr. Palombo shall obtain not less than fifty (50) credit hours per year for each of the three (3) years of his probationary period through attendance at and participation in continuing medical education ("CME") programs accredited by the American Medical Association. On or before the anniversary date of the effective date of this Consent Order, for each of the next three (3) years, Dr. Palombo shall cause to be submitted to the Board written certification of the CME programs and credits completed by him during the preceding twelve (12) months.

(8) Absence from the State/Practice/Effect on Probation. Should Dr. Palombo at any time during the period of probation ordered herein be absent from the state of Louisiana, relocate to and/or take up residency in another state or country, or discontinue practicing as a physician, for a period of thirty (30) days or more, he will so advise the Board in writing. In such instance, the probationary period ordered herein shall be deemed interrupted and extended for no less than the period of time during which he was not engaged in practice or was absent from the state of Louisiana; however, all terms

and conditions may continue to be in effect as ordered or may be modified or altered as needed at the Board's discretion.

(9) Notification. Dr. Palombo shall provide a complete copy of this Order to each hospital, clinic, facility or other employer or prospective employer at which or for whom he provides services as a physician in this state.

(10) Cooperation with Board's Probation and Compliance Officer. Dr. Palombo shall immediately notify the Board's Probation and Compliance Officer of any change in his current home and professional addresses and telephone numbers and he shall direct all matters required pursuant to this Consent Order to the attention of the Probation and Compliance Officer, with whom he shall cooperate on all matters and inquiries pertaining to his compliance with the terms and conditions of this Consent Order.

(11) Probation Monitoring Fee. For each year of the probationary period Dr. Palombo shall pay the Board a probation monitoring fee of Three Hundred (\$300.00) Dollars. Payment of the initial fee shall be due not later than sixty (60) days from the effective date of this Order. All subsequent annual payments shall be due on or before the anniversary date of the initial fee payment.

(12) Effect of Violation/Sanction/Resolution. By his subscription hereto, Dr. Palombo acknowledges that his receipt of written notification that the Board has received apparently reliable information which indicates his failure to comply with the requirements set forth by this Order in any respect shall, without the need for formal hearing or for providing him with any right to which he may otherwise be entitled pursuant to the Louisiana Administrative Procedure Act, La. Rev. Stat. §§49:951 et seq., or which otherwise may be afforded to him by law, constitute his irrevocable consent to the immediate suspension of his license to practice medicine as a physician in this state pending a hearing before the Board and the conclusion of the administrative proceedings by issuance of a final decision following administrative adjudication of such charges.

(13) Certification of Compliance with Probationary Terms/Personal Appearance. At least sixty (60) days prior to the conclusion of the probationary period imposed herein, Dr. Palombo shall provide the Board with an affidavit certifying that he has complied with each of the terms of probation imposed by this Order and he shall contact the Board and arrange for a personal appearance before the Board at its meeting preceding the expiration of his probationary period. The probationary period and all of its terms and conditions shall be, and shall be deemed to be, extended and continued in full force and effect pending Dr. Palombo' compliance with the requirements of this provision.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that any violation or failure of strict compliance with any of the terms and conditions set forth by this Order by Dr. Palombo shall be

deemed adequate and sufficient cause, upon proof of such violation or failure, for the revocation and cancellation of Dr. Dr. Palombo' license to practice medicine in the State of Louisiana or for such other action as the Board may deem appropriate, if such violations were enumerated among the causes provided in La. Rev. Stat. § 37:1285.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Consent Order shall be, and shall be deemed to be, a public record.

Signed at New Orleans, Louisiana, and effective on this 11th day of _____

April, 2016.

LOUISIANA STATE BOARD
OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

BY: 

J. MICHAEL BURDINE, M.D.
President

