



October 28, 2016

Personal and Confidential
Certified Mail - Return Receipt Requested

Christopher Suhr, M.D.
Onslow Surgical Clinic
255 Memorial Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546

Dear Dr. Suhr:

The North Carolina Medical Board (“Board”) has concluded its investigation regarding the professional liability payment paid on your behalf on July 17, 2015. It is the Board’s decision not to commence formal proceedings against your license at this time. However, the Board did vote to issue you this public, non-disciplinary letter of concern with a \$1000.00 administrative fine. The Board notes that you have paid the administrative fine. The Board does not consider a public letter of concern to be a disciplinary action or a limitation or restriction on your license.

The Board is concerned that in preparation for the removal of a lipoma on Patient A’s posterior neck, the surgery area and the hairline were treated with an alcohol based antibacterial solution called DuraPrep. Although the manufacturer’s recommended drying time is two to three minutes, you allowed the DuraPrep to dry for approximately ten minutes. You also blotted Patient A’s neckline with a sponge and, seeing no visible residue on the blotting sponge, Patient A’s head was covered with a drape. During the procedure, which was performed using open oxygen under monitored anesthesia care, strands of Patient A’s hair covered with DuraPrep solution residue were ignited from the electrocautery. The oxygen, which had accumulated under the drapes, served as a fire accelerant. Patient A was transferred by air with an endotracheal intubation to the UNC Burn Center for flash burns to the midface, nose, mouth, eyelids, and right ear.

The Board believes that you responded appropriately to the intraoperative emergency and notes that you sustained second degree burns to your hand trying to extinguish the flame. The Board also acknowledges that you and your operating team’s rapid response minimized harm to the patient.

The cause of the fire was multifactorial; however, the Board believes the surgeon is ultimately responsible for the patient’s safety during an operation. The Board urges you to take steps to ensure the conduct giving rise to the Board’s concerns does not happen again. In similar cases, you should use a non-alcohol based skin prep, allow additional drying time, or use a non-sparking

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cautery, minimize the use of open oxygen, and use draping techniques that allow adequate ventilation when open oxygen is used. The Board does acknowledge that you accepted responsibility for this incident, received additional training in surgical fire prevention and safety, and implemented risk-reduction procedures to reduce the risk of future similar occurrences.

If a similar mishap recurs, the Board may vote to commence formal disciplinary proceedings against your license to practice medicine. If that happens, this letter may be entered into evidence in determining the appropriate discipline.

This letter is a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes and is subject to public inspection and dissemination as required by that law. It will be reported to the Federation of State Medical Boards; however, it will not be reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pascal O. Udekwu" followed by a horizontal line and the initials "MO".

Pascal O. Udekwu, M.D.
President

POU/BB/lt