

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Middlesex, ss.

Board of Registration in Medicine

Adjudicatory Case No. 2024-028

In the Matter of)
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ALOK M. KANOJIA, M.D.)
_____)

STATEMENT OF ALLEGATIONS

The Board of Registration in Medicine (Board) has determined that good cause exists to believe the following acts occurred and constitute violations for which a licensee may be sanctioned by the Board. The Board therefore alleges that Alok M. Kanojia, M.D. (Respondent) has practiced medicine in violation of law, regulations, or good and accepted medical practice as set forth herein. The investigative docket number associated with this order to show cause is Docket No. 20-296.

Biographical Information

1. The Respondent graduated from Tufts University School of Medicine in 2014 and has been licensed to practice medicine in Massachusetts under license number 271400 since 2017. He is board-certified in psychiatry. He owns HealthyGamerGG and his private practice, Kanojia Psychiatry. The Respondent was previously affiliated with McLean Hospital from July 2018 through October 2020 and Harvard Medical School from July 2018 through October 2021.

Factual Allegations

2. HealthyGamerGG is advertised as “a mental health platform that provides content, coaching, and community resources to help young people take control of their mental health and their lives.”

3. The Respondent further advertises that he “brings the best of evidence-based psychiatry, complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), and his own understanding and experience as part of the internet generation to create a unique approach to mental health” through HealthyGamerGG.

4. HealthyGamerGG maintains live-stream and archived video profiles on Twitch.TV and YouTube.

- a. Twitch.TV is a monetized streaming platform associated with Amazon.
- b. Twitch.TV users pay for subscriptions, premium content, and supportive cheering during live streams.
- c. HealthyGamerGG’s Twitch.TV channel has over 621,000 subscribers.
- d. YouTube channels are monetized through advertisements on the platform.
- e. HealthyGamerGG’s YouTube channel has over 1.35 million subscribers.

5. The Respondent is the majority owner of HealthyGamerGG and is eligible for distributions.

6. The Respondent receives a salary from HealthyGamerGG.

7. The Respondent introduced himself to the HealthyGamerGG community as a Harvard-trained psychiatrist, trained at both Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and McLean Hospital.

8. The Respondent often wears a Harvard Medical School, MGH, and McLean Hospital emblazoned zip-up sweatshirt during his videos on HealthyGamerGG.

9. According to AMA Ethical Opinion 8.12,

Physicians who participate in the media can offer effective and accessible medical perspectives leading to a healthier and better-informed society. However, ethical

challenges present themselves when the worlds of medicine, journalism, and entertainment intersect. In the context of the media marketplace, understanding the role as a physician being distinct from a journalist, commentator, or media personality is imperative.

Physicians involved in the media environment should be aware of their ethical obligations to patients, the public, and the medical profession; and that their conduct can affect their medical colleagues, other health care professionals, as well as institutions with which they are affiliated. They should also recognize that members of the audience might not understand the unidirectional nature of the relationship and might think of themselves as patients. Physicians should:

- (a) Always remember that they are physicians first and foremost, and must uphold the values, norms, and integrity of the medical profession.
- (b) Encourage audience members to seek out qualified physicians to address the unique questions and concerns they have about their respective care when providing general medical advice.
- (c) Be aware of how their medical training, qualifications, experience, and advice are being used by media forums and how this information is being communicated to the viewing public.
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- (h) Fully disclose any conflicts of interest and avoid situations that may lead to potential conflicts.

10. The Respondent conducts interview-style videos with various individuals, often gamers who also live stream; these interviews are live-streamed on Twitch.TV.

- a. The HealthyGamerGG YouTube channel's "Interview" playlist contains approximately 148 videos originally streamed on Twitch.TV.

11. On or about December 4, 2019, the Respondent connected with acclaimed streamer, Reckful, and interviewed him for approximately two hours via Twitch.TV live stream.

- a. During this video, the Respondent and Reckful engage in a conversation about depression, bipolar, suicide, and psilocybin.
- b. The Respondent acknowledged that his colleagues worried that he could be sued if someone on his stream committed suicide.
- c. The Respondent offered Reckful to reach out to him if he had thoughts of killing himself.

12. On or about December 18, 2019, the Respondent and Reckful connected for a second live-streamed interview that lasted approximately one hour and twenty minutes.

- a. During this video, the Respondent and Reckful engage in a conversation about Reckful's history with therapy.
- b. The Respondent suggested that he and Reckful meet every week for four to eight weeks to address his loneliness.

13. On or about January 11, 2020, the Respondent and Reckful connected for a third live-streamed interview that lasted over two hours.

- a. During this video, the Respondent and Reckful engage in a conversation about depression, Reckful's brother's suicide, and psychedelics.

14. On or about January 23, 2020, the Respondent and Reckful connected for a fourth live-streamed interview that lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

- a. During this video, the Respondent and Reckful engage in a conversation about borderline personality disorder.
- b. The Respondent stated that he would “try to love” Reckful for two years.

15. On or about January 29, 2020, the Respondent and Reckful connected for a fifth live-streamed interview that lasted approximately one hour and fifty minutes.

- a. During this video, the Respondent and Reckful engage in a conversation addressing their discussion from January 23, 2020.
- b. The Respondent and Reckful discussed the bounds of their relationship and whether the Respondent was Reckful’s therapist or friend.
- c. The Respondent acknowledged that his “very bold claim” about loving Reckful for two years was “irresponsible.”
- d. Later in this video, Reckful told the Respondent he remained conflicted about the status and definition of their relationship.

16. On or about February 12, 2020, the Respondent and Reckful connected for a sixth, and final, live-streamed interview that lasted approximately forty minutes.

- a. During this video, Reckful mentioned that he and the Respondent would continue their conversations offline, off-stream.

17. On or about June 30, 2020, Reckful’s friend engaged the Respondent to discuss Reckful’s declining mental health.

- a. During his conversations with Reckful and his friends, the Respondent followed standard referral guidelines, including referrals for outpatient care, higher levels of care, and guidance around the use of emergency services.

18. On July 2, 2020, Reckful died by suicide.

Legal Basis for Proposed Relief

A. Pursuant to Levy v. Board of Registration in Medicine, 378 Mass. 519 (1979); Raymond v. Board of Registration in Medicine, 387 Mass. 708 (1982), and Sugarman v. Board of Registration in Medicine, 422 Mass. 338 (1996), the Board may discipline a physician upon proof satisfactory to a majority of the Board that said physician lacks good moral character and has engaged in conduct that undermines the public confidence in the integrity of the medical profession.

The Board has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to G.L. c. 112, §§ 5, 61 and 62. This adjudicatory proceeding will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of G.L. c. 30A and 801 CMR 1.01.

Nature of Relief Sought

The Board is authorized and empowered to order appropriate disciplinary action, which may include revocation or suspension of the Respondent's license to practice medicine. The Board may also order, in addition to or instead of revocation or suspension, one or more of the following: admonishment, censure, reprimand, fine, the performance of uncompensated public service, a course of education or training, or other restrictions upon the Respondent's practice of medicine.

Order

Wherefore, it is hereby **ORDERED** that the Respondent show cause why the Board should not discipline the Respondent for the conduct described herein.

By the Board of Registration in Medicine,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Booker T. Bush', written over a horizontal line.

Booker T. Bush, M.D.
Board Chair

Date: June 10, 2024