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# Profile of College's current president

Dr. Rocco Gerace

Brian Chick - Special to thestar.com

Profile: Dr. Rocco Gerace, President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

Dr. Rocco Gerace has been dealing with complaints for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario since 1996. Now, as president of the college, he struggles with the dilemma between second chances and stricter discipline.

"The thought process is: Is this doctor redeemable? What is the best way to ensure that the care provided will be good?" he says. Gerace was appointed to the college's executive council in 1997 as a representative for the University of Western Ontario, where he chairs the Department of Emergency Medicine. Since then, he has chaired the complaints committee at the college three times.

"The public expectation is that when you make a mistake, you punish," he says. "We have to balance the will of the public for revenge - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth - versus what's best for the public interest, which is having doctors deliver better care.

"If there is a potential that a physician's

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...if there is a potential that a physician's practice or behaviour can be improved and if the public interest can be protected in that regard, then that's the way I think we should go."

Gerace knows that doctors aren't perfect. "We've all made mistakes," he says, "I know I have. I'm an emergency room doctor and it's often hectic and crowded. Mistakes happen. The practice of medicine is not perfect, as much as we would like it to be."

Human error plagues the profession, and is the cause of many complaints, according to Gerace. "(There is a) serious problem of medical error. It's an epidemic and if we could deal with it, the results would be enormous cost savings and a reduction of suffering," he says.

But mistakes still happen, he notes. What follows is another question. If a doctor receives a complaint, should he be disciplined or assessed? Should the public know? Should there be greater transparency in the system?

"If I made a mistake," says Gerace, "I don't think I would want it broadcast on the Internet . . . The mere fact of a complaint should not be on the public record because some are pretty frivolous. If it is a serious concern about behaviour, we have to be more open."

Gerace believes the vast majority of Ontario doctors are problem-free. "(We get) 4,500 complaints a year. When you look at the number of physician-patient interactions in a day, it's in the tens of thousands. That's not a very bad record. In fact, I would say it's pretty good. We forget that we actually do a pretty good job."

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