



THE  
COLLEGE  
OF  
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AND  
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OF  
ONTARIO

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January 23, 2015

From the Office of the President  
Telephone: (416) 967-2600 x406  
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To: National Post, Op-Ed Editor

Re: Free to refuse: A modest proposal for respecting physicians' freedom of conscience

Dear Sir,

I was dismayed to read the following quote attributed to our spokesperson Dr. Marc Gabel in your paper today: *"Dr. Gabel has been reported as saying that "physicians unwilling to provide or facilitate abortion for reasons of conscience should not be family physicians" and it seems wants the College to approve that stance."*

Dr. Gabel said no such thing. It appears to be an inference based on paraphrasing from another source.

It is irresponsible of Ms. Somerville to write a story with such an inflammatory statement without first confirming its accuracy, and also without citing the supposed source.

Moreover, Ms. Somerville's entire piece misrepresents our draft Professional Obligations and Human Rights Policy.

The College's expectations of physicians who limit the health services they provide on moral or religious grounds is that they must do so in a manner that respects patient dignity, ensures access to care and protects patient safety.

More specifically, our draft policy (which is currently open for public consultation), says that physicians, who are unwilling to provide certain elements of care due to their moral or religious beliefs, are required to refer the patient to another health care provider. This must be an "effective referral" which means one that is made in good faith, to a non-objecting, available and accessible physician or other health care provider.

You can read the entire policy and also the feedback to our consultation thus far at this link:

[http://policyconsult.cpso.on.ca/?page\\_id=5165](http://policyconsult.cpso.on.ca/?page_id=5165)

I anticipate a correction to be printed at the earliest opportunity. Please notify me when I can expect this.

Thank you.

Dr. Carol Leet, President  
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario