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## Healthcare Practitioner Alert: Medical Commission Suspends License of Seattle Pain Centers Medical Director

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### Overview

- The Washington State Medical Commission is taking action against Frank Li, MD for substandard care.
- This action impacts Seattle Pain Centers' eight clinics across Washington (Everett, Seattle, Renton, Tacoma, Poulsbo, Olympia, Vancouver, and Spokane) and potentially 25,000 patients.
- The Medical Commission is working with the Department of Health, the Health Care Authority, Office of the Insurance Commissioner and the represented professional associations and regulators to coordinate resources and minimize gaps in care for affected patients.

### For Practitioners (MDs, DOs, PAs, ARNPs)

The Medical Commission has a website (<http://goo.gl/TEu1fg>) of resources dedicated to pain management and opioid use. **We encourage all practitioners to accept Seattle Pain Center patients under their care.** We are providing a list of resources on chronic opioid therapy for practitioners that may encounter affected patients.

- TelePain (<http://goo.gl/59NOMl>) provides consultation in the management of chronic pain problems.
- The University of Washington launched a psychiatry and addiction case conference series in July. For more information visit <https://goo.gl/uzsemd> or email [UWpacc@uw.edu](mailto:UWpacc@uw.edu). CME is available.
- Consultation options are available at UW Pain Medicine (<http://goo.gl/EHDrML>).
- The Agency Medical Directors' Group guideline (<http://goo.gl/u6IewG>) and the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids (<http://goo.gl/SiLbUK>) provide recommendations for chronic opioid cases.
- The Washington Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) is a tool providers should use to monitor the total quantity of all controlled substances, including opioids, dispensed to a patient (<http://goo.gl/RljAZE>).

### For Pharmacists

- For the safety of the patients, **please continue to honor prescriptions from these clinics.** Prescriptions from Dr. Li are valid if dated prior to July 15, 2016.
- If you question the validity of a prescription from these clinics, please contact the insurance plan or Pharmacy Commission (<http://goo.gl/xAFy0h>) for clarification before rejecting the prescription.

### For Hospitals and Emergency Rooms

- Be prepared for an increase in patients who may be experiencing withdrawal from opioids, benzodiazepines or other controlled substances.
- Pain Medication Safety Guidelines in the Emergency Department are available at (<http://goo.gl/4WmS5A>).



# News Release



Medical  
Quality  
Assurance  
Commission

**For immediate release:** July 15, 2106

(16-087)

Contact: [Julie Graham](#), Communications Office

360-810-1628

## **Medical Commission Suspends Medical Director of Seattle Pain Centers** *Action impacts eight clinics throughout Washington*

**OLYMPIA** — The Washington State Medical Commission immediately suspended the medical license of Frank D. Li (MD0049251) for alleged violations of the Uniform Disciplinary Act and for violation of the Washington State Pain Rules. Charges say Dr. Li consistently provided treatment that was an extreme departure from the standard of care, exposing patients of Seattle Pain Centers to risks of harm for opioid addiction, diversion, and overdose.

The Medical Commission alleges Dr. Li specifically sought Medicaid-enrolled patients with the intent to bill the maximum allowable amount by requiring unnecessary testing and procedures. Further, charges state, he intentionally employed recently graduated clinicians with little-to-no experience in pain management and that Li maintained unacceptable levels of oversight and management necessary to fulfill the duties of a medical director of a safe practice.

As the medical director for Seattle Pain Centers, Li established business practices that do not protect patient safety including: instituting “templated” recordkeeping regardless of type of patient visit; allowing clinical practice by providers before they’ve been credentialed by insurance; allowing providers to bill under another provider’s insurance number before securing their own; failing to appropriately respond to clearly demonstrated patient risk behaviors documented in medical records; and as medical director, failing to investigate reports of patient deaths or hospitalizations attributed to treatment received at Seattle Pain Centers.

Dr. Li must respond within 20 days of the Medical Commission issuing the order. If this happens, a “show cause” hearing must be held within 14 days of the request to determine if the summary suspension will remain in effect throughout the formal hearing process.

Li’s suspension requires any physician assistant who has a delegation agreement with Li to find another primary physician who can serve as sponsor. New delegation agreements must be approved by the Medical Commission before the providers can perform any health care service, including

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issuing of new prescriptions or renewals. The impacted physician assistants are being contacted immediately to ensure they're aware of the restrictions on their ability to practice until the Medical Commission approves new delegation agreements.

The Medical Commission opened investigations on all medical doctors and physician assistants practicing at the Seattle Pain Centers based on concerns of poor practice standards in place throughout the Seattle Pain Center organization. The Commission authorized filing of complaints on all advance registered nurse practitioners and doctors of osteopathy practicing at the Seattle Pain Centers. These complaints will be managed by each oversight body according to standard protocol and law.

Dr. Li has an active "core provider" agreement in Washington to see Apple Health (Medicaid) patients. Washington's Health Care Authority (HCA) expects to terminate his core provider agreement after the Medical Commission's action suspending his license. This means that other providers in his clinics will not be able to bill for Apple Health (Medicaid) services provided in his clinics. They can reapply for participation, but will not be able to bill for services unless a new application is accepted.

This action may limit patients' access to care. The Department of Health urges patients of the Seattle Pain Centers to contact their health insurance company and primary care provider as soon as possible to try to minimize disruptions in their care. The Medical Commission has additional [information for patients](#) of Seattle Pain Centers.

### **Media Availability**

Time: 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., Friday, July 15, 2016

Location: 101 Israel Rd SE, Tumwater, WA 98501, Washington State Department of Health,

To schedule an interview contact: Julie Graham, Strategic Communications; 360-810-1628

The documents in this case can be seen online by clicking "[Look up a health care provider](#)" on the [Department of Health website](#). Copies can be requested by calling 360-236-4700. That number can also be used to file complaints against health care providers in Washington

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The Medical Commission promotes patient safety and enhances the integrity of the profession through licensing, rule-making, discipline, and education. Learn more about the commission: [www.doh.wa.gov/medical](http://www.doh.wa.gov/medical). Follow the Medical Commission on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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# Medical Commission Discipline Process

This flowchart displays the complaint process and the estimated timeframes. The reconsideration request and judicial review process timeframes refer to the length of time determined by statute for the complainant or respondent to complete the necessary steps for those actions. The Commission determines the length of compliance monitoring on a case-by-case basis. We encourage you to read the [Practitioner Regulation](#) section of the website for complete details.

**Intake and Assessment: 21 Days**   **Investigation: 170 Days**   **Case Disposition: 140 Days**  
**Request Reconsideration: 30 Days**   **Reconsideration Petition: 10 Days**   **Judicial Review: 30 Days**

