

ALBERTA COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

IN THE MATTER OF
THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS ACT

AND IN THE MATTER OF A HEARING REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF

AZHAR QURESHI
Registration Number 6099

**DECISION OF THE HEARING TRIBUNAL ON SANCTIONS
AND COSTS**

March 24, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

The Hearing Tribunal comprised of Brad Couldwell, Pharmacist and Chair, Peter Sherstan, Public Member, Laurie Reay, Pharmacist, and Kate Freeman, Public Member, held a hearing into the conduct of Mr. Azhar Qureshi on September 9, 10, 11, and 12, 2025.

On December 18, 2025, the Hearing Tribunal issued its decision on the merits of the allegations (the “Merits Decision”). The Hearing Tribunal found Allegations 2 and 3 in the Notice of Hearing issued against Mr. Qureshi had been proven on a balance of probabilities and that the proven allegations constituted unprofessional conduct. The Hearing Tribunal’s Merits Decision requested the parties’ submissions on sanction.

On February 9, 2026, the Hearing Tribunal received written submissions on sanction from the Complaints Director. The written submission contained a joint submission on sanctions that was jointly requested by the Complaints Director and Mr. Qureshi. The Hearing Tribunal did not receive any additional submissions from Mr. Qureshi.

The Hearing Tribunal met on February 19, 2026, and considered the record of the hearing, its findings of unprofessional conduct against Mr. Qureshi, the joint submission on sanctions, and the written submissions of the Complaints Director. Mr. Jason Kully attended with the Hearing Tribunal as its independent legal counsel.

II. ALLEGATIONS

In the Merits Decision, the Hearing Tribunal found Allegations 2 and 3 in the Notice of Hearing to have been proven and to constitute unprofessional conduct pursuant to the *Health Professions Act*, RSA 2000, c. H-7 (“HPA”). These allegations were:

IT IS ALLEGED THAT while you were a registered Alberta pharmacist and the owner and proprietor of pharmacies in Alberta, you:

2. Misused one or more controlled drugs on:
 - a. January 10, 2024;
 - b. July 15, 2024;
3. Was not honest with James Krempien, the Complaints Director and an investigator of the Alberta College of Pharmacy, including when, as part of your response to the complaint against you, you stated:
 - a. You did not remove drugs from any of the pharmacies that you own for return, storage, disposal or other purposes;
 - b. You were administered nitroglycerin after being admitted to the Royal Alexandra Hospital on January 10, 2024;
 - c. You did not provide a urine sample when you were admitted to the Sturgeon Hospital on July 15, 2024;

- d. You told staff at the Sturgeon Hospital that you have an allergy to morphine (or equivalent) when you were admitted on July 15, 2024.

IT IS ALLEGED THAT your conduct in these matters:

- a. Breached your statutory and regulatory obligations to the Alberta College of Pharmacy as an Alberta pharmacist;
- b. Undermined the integrity of the profession;
- c. Decreased the public's trust in the profession;
- d. Created the potential for patient harm; and
- e. Failed to exercise the professional and ethical judgment expected and required of an Alberta pharmacist.

IT IS ALLEGED THAT your conduct constitutes a breach of the following statutes and standards governing the practice of pharmacy:

- Standards 1 (sub-standards 1.1(a), (c), and (f)), 1.2 of the Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians that were in effect at the time;
- Principles 10 (1, 2, and 10) and 11(5) of the ACP Code of Ethics;
- Section 4(1) of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

and that your conduct set out above and the breach of some or all of these provisions constitutes unprofessional conduct pursuant to the provisions of sections 1(1)(pp)(ii), 1(1)(pp)(iii), 1(1)(pp)(vii)(B) and 1(1)(pp)(xii) of the *Health Professions Act*.

III. SUBMISSIONS ON SANCTION

The Complaints Director referred to the Hearing Tribunal's powers to impose sanctions in section 82 of the HPA. The Complaints Director described the purposes of sanctions orders in professional discipline proceedings as the protection of the public and maintaining the integrity of the pharmacy profession,

The Complaints Director discussed the law on joint submissions of sanction. The Complaints Director stated that the Hearing Tribunal was required to show deference to a joint submission on sanction and could only stray from it if the proposed sanctions did not meet the public interest test, citing the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R v Anthony-Cook*, 2016 SCC 43 and the Ontario Superior Court of Justice's decision in *Bradley v Ontario College of Teachers*, 2021 ONSC 2303. The Complaints Director emphasized that the public interest test sets a high bar that recognizes the negotiation process between two parties.

The Complaints Director reviewed seven considerations that were relevant to determining an appropriate sanction as identified by the Alberta Court of Appeal in *Charkhandeh v College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta*, 2025 ABCA 258:

1. *Seriousness of the conduct:* The Complaints Director reviewed the findings of the Hearing Tribunal in the Merits Decision and submitted the proven allegations constituted serious unprofessional conduct.
2. *Factors relating to the fundamental purpose of sanctions:* The Complaints Director submitted the sanctions needed to deter Mr. Qureshi from future similar conduct, as well as deter other members of the pharmacy profession from engaging in similar conduct. The sanctions imposed had to act as a general deterrence and make clear to the profession that substance misuse and dishonest conduct during an investigation will not be tolerated.
3. *Character and personal attributes of the professional:* The Complaints Director submitted that Mr. Qureshi was an experienced pharmacist who owns six pharmacies and his conduct could not be excused by a lack of experience. The Complaints Director also submitted that Mr. Qureshi had previously been found to have engaged in the unauthorized removal of drugs and records from one or more pharmacies that Mr. Qureshi owned to a location where he was not authorized to store drugs or records.
4. *Impact on the complainant:* The Complaints Director was not aware of any patients or members of the public being affected.
5. *Mitigating factors:* While Mr. Qureshi did not admit to the conduct, his willingness to enter a joint submission on sanction suggested he agreed that significant sanctions are warranted.
6. *Impact of the sanction on the professional:* Sanction must also be fair and not overly burdensome to the member. A significant suspension for serious infractions also provides space to complete remedial and rehabilitative steps that provide a pathway back to practice. A tailored course of study requires attention to be given to the issues that led to unprofessional conduct and to meaningfully re-commit to the profession's professional ethics and standards. Seeking medical assistance and complying with monitoring recommendations are intended to have a positive lasting effect on well-being. The hearing tribunal notes that the financial components associated with these restorative sanctions while impactful, are reasonably borne by the member and necessary to mitigate future risks while also assuring ACP and the public that only those fit to practice will return to practice.
7. *Parity:* Similar cases should warrant similar sanctions. The Complaints Director provided the 2023 case of Ryan Young for context and to show the orders requested by the Complaints Director and agreed to by Mr. Qureshi are fair and closely comparable. Mr. Young removed cocaine from the hospital inventory where he was employed as a pharmacy technician. He attempted to conceal these diversions by creating false records and he also misused the drug while on shift. The Hearing Tribunal in the Young case ordered he undergo an independent medical assessment, practice under direct supervision upon returning to practice and provide notice of his misconduct to employers. Mr. Young was also prohibited from being a pharmacy owner and proprietor and responsible for the full costs of the hearing.

With these considerations in mind, the joint submission on sanctions for orders proposed by the Complaints Director and Mr. Qureshi pursuant to section 82 of the HPA were:

1. Mr. Qureshi's practice permit shall be suspended for 18 months, with
 - a. 12 months to be served beginning within one week of the date of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision on Sanctions and Costs; and,
 - b. 6 months held in abeyance, to be imposed by the Complaints Director at any time if he receives an additional complaint or information about Mr. Qureshi related to the misuse or potential misuse of drugs or other substances.
2. Mr. Qureshi shall provide the Complaints Director with evidence that he has received an unconditional pass on the CPEP Probe Course. If Mr. Qureshi fails to provide the Complaints Director with evidence that he has received an unconditional pass on the CPEP Probe Course before the end of the suspension he is required to serve under Order 1a., then Mr. Qureshi's practice permit shall remain suspended until such time as this Order is completed.
3. After Mr. Qureshi completes his suspension in Order 1a. and satisfies the Complaints Director he has completed Order 2, he shall not be permitted to apply to have his practice permit reinstated until, and in addition to any other registration requirements imposed by the ACP's Registration Department, Mr. Qureshi provides the Complaints Director with a report from a physician that indicates Mr. Qureshi is fit to practice. The physician issuing the fitness to practice report must have knowledge of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision on the Merits, be satisfactory to the Complaints Director, have completed the fitness to practice report within three months of Mr. Qureshi's application to have his practice permit reinstated, and describe any ongoing monitoring and support measures that Mr. Qureshi will need to comply with to help ensure Mr. Qureshi's ongoing fitness to practice. Mr. Qureshi is responsible for the cost of the fitness to practice assessment and the report to be provided under this Order as well as any monitoring and support measures recommended in the report.
4. Any practice permit issued to Mr. Qureshi upon the satisfaction of Orders 1, 2 and 3 above, shall be subject to the following conditions:
 - a. For one year after his practice permit is reinstated, Mr. Qureshi must provide evidence to the Complaints Director's satisfaction that he is complying with the recommended monitoring and support measures set out in the report issued under Order 3;
 - b. Mr. Qureshi shall practice under direct supervision for a minimum of six months following his return to practice. The pharmacist supervising Mr. Qureshi's practice must directly observe Mr. Qureshi's practice and conduct for a minimum of six months, have knowledge of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision and provide a report that satisfies the Complaints Director that Mr. Qureshi is prepared to practice independently and that there are no concerns

or observations related to or suggesting his misuse of drugs or other substances; and,

- c. Mr. Qureshi is prohibited from serving as a licensee of a pharmacy for a period of five years, beginning on the date that his practice permit is reinstated under this Order.
5. Mr. Qureshi shall provide a copy of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision to any pharmacy employer or licensee of a pharmacy in which he works or owns for a period of five years, beginning on the date of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision on Sanctions and Costs.
6. Mr. Qureshi shall pay 70% of the costs of the hearing to a maximum of \$18,000. Payment will occur in accordance with a monthly payment schedule as directed by the Hearings Director within 24 months of the date of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision on Sanctions and Costs.

In relation to the suspension order, the Complaints Director submitted a suspension is serious and would demonstrate that the conduct would not be tolerated by the College and protects the public and maintains the integrity of the profession. Specifically, it would require Mr. Qureshi to stay out of practice for a period of time and allow the Complaints Director to remove Mr. Qureshi should future concerns arise. The suspension also ensures that Mr. Qureshi is out of practice until he completes the CPEP Probe Course and could be assessed and receive treatment and monitoring recommendations related to his fitness to practice.

The CPEP Probe Course was intended to address Mr. Qureshi's conduct in Allegation 3 and it would require him to understand the gravity of his conduct. It would have to be completed prior to any return to practice.

A requirement for Mr. Qureshi to undertake an independent medical assessment and comply with monitoring recommendations was intended to mitigate future risk. This was intended to be remedial and rehabilitative and provide Mr. Qureshi with a pathway back to practice while also ensuring the College and the public that he is fit to practice and will remain in that condition once he returns.

The Complaints Director submitted the misuse of substances by Mr. Qureshi created the potential for personal and patient harm. The misuse of controlled drugs occurred in a pharmacy and a corporate office, indicating that any return to practice should be supervised for a period of time to ensure Mr. Qureshi was supported by his colleagues.

The Complaints Director submitted the proven conduct suggested that Mr. Qureshi could not be trusted by the College and that it was appropriate for him to spend time back in practice without further incident before he was able to serve as a licensee and be responsible for the operation of a licensed pharmacy.

The Complaints Director submitted Mr. Qureshi should be required to provide a copy of the Hearing Tribunal's decisions to any pharmacy employer or licensee of a pharmacy in which he works or owns for 5 years as it was important that any potential pharmacy employers as

well as the licensees of the pharmacies Mr. Qureshi owns be aware of his proven conduct to ensure it is not being repeated.

Regarding the order for the payment of costs, the Complaints Director referred to the guidance on costs provided by the Alberta Court of Appeal in *Charkhandeh v College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta*, 2025 ABCA 258. In determining if a costs award against Mr. Qureshi was warranted and met the public interest test, the Complaints Director submitted:

1. *Degree of success*: two of three allegations were proven and found to constitute unprofessional conduct.
2. *Length and extent of the hearing*: Mr. Qureshi did not admit to any allegations and the length and extent of the hearing were reasonable given the scope of the allegation.
3. *Parties' hearing conduct*: The Complaints Director presented the case reasonably and Mr. Qureshi's decision not to admit the allegations was not an aggravating factor.

With respect to the quantum of costs, the Complaints Director stated the costs payable were reasonable and proportionate. The total costs incurred in the hearing by the College were \$48,978.91, with such costs not including any costs related to the sanctions phase, so the total costs could be over \$55,000. The College incurred expenses for a court reporter, legal fees for counsel for the Complaints Director, and legal fees for independent legal counsel to the hearing tribunal. It was reasonable for the ACP to have these services and related expenses. The Complaints Director noted that the costs did not include soft costs associated with the hearing. The Complaints Director submitted it was reasonable to transfer costs for the court reporter and the Complaints Director's legal counsel onto Mr. Qureshi, in light of the degree of success of the Complaints Director and the fact that the parties agree that these costs should be passed onto Mr. Qureshi. Finally, the costs amount was not of such a magnitude that there was no realistic prospect of it not being paid.

IV. DECISION ON ORDERS AND REASONS FOR DECISION ON ORDERS

The Hearing Tribunal has carefully considered the evidence, its findings of unprofessional conduct and the joint submission on sanctions. The Hearing Tribunal acknowledges it should defer to the joint submission on sanction unless it believes the proposed sanctions would bring the administration of justice into disrepute or would otherwise be contrary to the public of interest.

In this case, the Tribunal is satisfied that the jointly proposed sanctions are appropriate, proportionate, and consistent with the purposes of professional discipline. They serve the objectives of public protection, specific and general deterrence, rehabilitation where possible, and the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

The Tribunal recognizes that an 18-month suspension, with 12 months served and six month potentially held in abeyance, is a significant and serious sanction. However, the Hearing Tribunal has determined that Mr. Qureshi's serious conduct justifies this sanction.

As stated by the Tribunal in the Merits Decision, the misuse of controlled drugs by a pharmacist fundamentally breaches the trust and confidence that the public must be able to place in regulated health professionals. This conduct demonstrates a disregard for statutory requirements, practice standards, and the principles of integrity and responsibility that underpin the pharmacist's professional obligations. As also stated by the Tribunal in the Merits Decision, dishonesty during an investigation undermines a regulator's ability to protect the public and to investigate potential patient safety concerns. Further, dishonesty obstructs that process and causes harm that extends beyond the individual matter: it erodes confidence in the profession's commitment to transparency and accountability. As a result of the seriousness of Mr. Qureshi's unprofessional conduct, a significant suspension is warranted.

The Tribunal further notes that Mr. Qureshi previously received a 12-month suspension arising from a separate finding of unprofessional conduct. Progressive discipline is an important principle in professional regulation. In light of this prior discipline, a longer suspension is warranted to reinforce the seriousness of repeated misconduct, to deter Mr. Qureshi from further breaches of his obligations, and to signal to the profession that repeated findings will attract increasingly significant consequences.

Further, the Hearing Tribunal agrees the length of suspension is appropriate to ensure that Mr. Qureshi remains out of practice until he can complete the CPEP Probe Course and receive treatment and monitoring recommendations in relation to his fitness to practice. Completion of the course and treatment will address the concerns the Tribunal identified about Mr. Qureshi's fitness to practice and his disregard for legal and ethical requirements.

The requirement to complete the CPEP Probe Course, to undergo an independent medical assessment, and to comply with any recommended monitoring or treatment are remedial in nature. They are designed to promote insight, accountability, and safe practice. Together, these measures create a structured and accountable pathway for Mr. Qureshi's potential return to practice, while ensuring that the College and the public have objective assurance of his fitness to practice before that return occurs.

The Tribunal also agrees that additional safeguards are necessary upon any return to practice. The requirement that Mr. Qureshi practice under direct supervision for a minimum of six months is a protective and rehabilitative measure. It will provide oversight during his reintegration into practice and help ensure adherence to professional standards, thereby supporting both public protection and the integrity of the profession.

The Tribunal accepts the proposal that Mr. Qureshi be prohibited from acting as a pharmacy licensee for a period of five years from the date of this decision. Under the governing framework, a licensee bears significant responsibility for the operation of a pharmacy, including oversight of personnel, policies, procedures, and compliance with standards of practice and ethics. In this case, Mr. Qureshi's conduct demonstrates that he cannot presently be entrusted with such authority. The absence of oversight inherent in that role raises a risk of recurrence and of adverse influence on others. The five-year prohibition reflects the seriousness of the misconduct and allows a meaningful period for rehabilitation and the rebuilding of trust before he may be considered for such a position again.

The requirement that a copy of this decision be provided to any pharmacy employer or pharmacy licensee is also appropriate. Transparency promotes accountability and enables appropriate workplace oversight, thereby reducing the risk of repetition and enhancing public protection.

With respect to the Costs order jointly proposed by the parties, the Tribunal agrees that payment of 70% of costs up to a maximum of \$18,000.00 is appropriate and consistent with *Charkhandeh v College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta*, 2025 ABCA 258. The Tribunal agrees that this order meets the public interest test and is of an appropriate magnitude. Further, as observed by the Complaints Director, the costs award accounts only for the costs of the court reporter and the Complaints Director's legal counsel and does not make Mr. Qureshi responsible for the Hearing Tribunal's expenses or independent legal counsel costs. The Hearing Tribunal finds that a costs order is warranted and that the quantum jointly proposed is reasonable and proportionate.

V. ORDERS

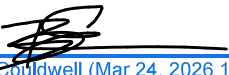
For the reasons outlined above, the Hearing Tribunal accepts the joint submission on sanctions and makes the following orders pursuant to section 82 of the HPA:

1. Mr. Qureshi's practice permit shall be suspended for 18 months, with
 - a. 12 months to be served beginning within one week of the date of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision on Sanctions and Costs; and
 - b. 6 months held in abeyance, to be imposed by the Complaints Director at any time if he receives an additional complaint or information about Mr. Qureshi related to the misuse or potential misuse of drugs or other substances.
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cost of the fitness to practice assessment and the report to be provided under this Order as well as any monitoring and support measures recommended in the report.

4. Any practice permit issued to Mr. Qureshi upon the satisfaction of Orders 1, 2 and 3 above, shall be subject to the following conditions:
 - a. For one year after his practice permit is reinstated, Mr. Qureshi must provide evidence to the Complaints Director's satisfaction that he is complying with the recommended monitoring and support measures set out in the report issued under Order 3;
 - b. Mr. Qureshi shall practice under direct supervision for a minimum of six months following his return to practice. The pharmacist supervising Mr. Qureshi's practice must directly observe Mr. Qureshi's practice and conduct for a minimum of six months, have knowledge of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision and provide a report that satisfies the Complaints Director that Mr. Qureshi is prepared to practice independently and that there are no concerns or observations related to or suggesting his misuse of drugs or other substances; and,
 - c. Mr. Qureshi is prohibited from serving as a licensee of a pharmacy for a period of five years, beginning on the date that his practice permit is reinstated under this Order.
5. Mr. Qureshi shall provide a copy of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision to any pharmacy employer or licensee of a pharmacy in which he works or owns for a period of five years, beginning on the date of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision on Sanctions and Costs.
6. Mr. Qureshi shall pay 70% of the costs of the hearing to a maximum of \$18,000. Payment will occur in accordance with a monthly payment schedule as directed by the Hearings Director within 24 months of the date of the Hearing Tribunal's Decision on Sanctions and Costs.

Signed on behalf of the Hearing Tribunal by the Chair on March 24, 2026

Per: 
Brad Couldwell (Mar 24, 2026 10:49:47 MDT)
Brad Couldwell