

**BEFORE THE
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

Satnam S. Atwal, M.D.

**Physician's & Surgeon's
Certificate No. A 45196**

Respondent.

Case No. 800-2020-073023

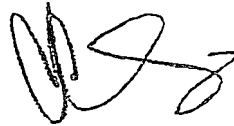
DECISION

The attached Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order is hereby adopted as the Decision and Order of the Medical Board of California, Department of Consumer Affairs, State of California.

This Decision shall become effective at 5:00 p.m. on April 25, 2024.

IT IS SO ORDERED: March 26, 2024.

MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA



**Laurie Rose Lubiano, J.D., Chair
Panel A**

1 ROB BONTA
Attorney General of California
2 STEVE DIEHL
Supervising Deputy Attorney General
3 MATTHEW FLEMING
Deputy Attorney General
4 State Bar No. 277992
1300 I Street, Suite 125
5 P.O. Box 944255
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7 *Attorneys for Complainant*

8
9 **BEFORE THE**
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
10 **DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS**
11 **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

12 In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

Case No. 800-2020-073023

13 **SATNAM S. ATWAL, M.D.**
14 **7055 N Chestnut Ave Ste 101**
15 **Fresno CA 93720-0350**

STIPULATED SETTLEMENT AND
DISCIPLINARY ORDER

16 **Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. A**
17 **45196**

18 Respondent.

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20 In the interest of a prompt and speedy settlement of this matter, consistent with the public
21 interest and the responsibility of the Medical Board of California of the Department of Consumer
22 Affairs, the parties hereby agree to the following Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order
23 which will be submitted to the Board for approval and adoption as the final disposition of the
24 Accusation.

25 **PARTIES**

26 1. Reji Varghese (Complainant) is the Executive Director of the Medical Board of
27 California (Board). He brought this action solely in his official capacity and is represented in this

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1 matter by Rob Bonta, Attorney General of the State of California, by Matthew Fleming, Deputy
2 Attorney General.

3 2. Respondent Satnam S. Atwal, M.D. (Respondent) is represented in this proceeding by
4 attorney Dennis R. Thelen, Esq., whose address is: Law Offices of LeBeau • Thelen, LLP
5 P.O. Box 12092 Bakersfield, CA 93389-20922.1. On or about August 15, 1988, the Board issued
6 Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. A 45196 to Satnam S. Atwal, M.D. (Respondent). The
7 Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the
8 charges brought in Accusation No. 800-2020-073023, and will expire on November 30, 2025,
9 unless renewed.

10 **JURISDICTION**

11 3. Accusation No. 800-2020-073023 was filed before the Board, and is currently
12 pending against Respondent. The Accusation and all other statutorily required documents were
13 properly served on Respondent on August 28, 2023. Respondent timely filed his Notice of
14 Defense contesting the Accusation.

15 4. A copy of Accusation No. 800-2020-073023 is attached as exhibit A and incorporated
16 herein by reference.

17 **ADVISEMENT AND WAIVERS**

18 5. Respondent has carefully read, fully discussed with counsel, and understands the
19 charges and allegations in Accusation No. 800-2020-073023. Respondent has also carefully read,
20 fully discussed with his counsel, and understands the effects of this Stipulated Settlement and
21 Disciplinary Order.

22 6. Respondent is fully aware of his legal rights in this matter, including the right to a
23 hearing on the charges and allegations in the Accusation; the right to confront and cross-examine
24 the witnesses against him; the right to present evidence and to testify on his own behalf; the right
25 to the issuance of subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of
26 documents; the right to reconsideration and court review of an adverse decision; and all other
27 rights accorded by the California Administrative Procedure Act and other applicable laws.

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1 correct and fully admitted by respondent for purposes of any such proceeding or any other
2 licensing proceeding involving Respondent in the State of California.

3 13. The parties understand and agree that Portable Document Format (PDF) and facsimile
4 copies of this Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order, including PDF and facsimile
5 signatures thereto, shall have the same force and effect as the originals.

6 14. In consideration of the foregoing admissions and stipulations, the parties agree that
7 the Board may, without further notice or opportunity to be heard by the Respondent, issue and
8 enter the following Disciplinary Order:

9 **DISCIPLINARY ORDER**

10 1. **PUBLIC REPRIMAND.** IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Physician's and Surgeon's
11 Certificate No. A 45196 issued to Respondent SATNAM S. ATWAL, M.D. shall be and is
12 hereby Publicly Reprimanded pursuant to California Business and Professions Code section 2227,
13 subdivision (a), subsection (4). This Public Reprimand, which is issued in connection with
14 Respondent's care and treatment of two patients as set forth in Accusation No. 800-2020-073023,
15 is as follows: "In 2020, you failed to document informed consent when prescribing
16 benzodiazepines to two patients."

17 2. **MEDICAL RECORD KEEPING COURSE.** Within 60 calendar days of the effective
18 date of this Decision, Respondent shall enroll in a course in medical record keeping approved in
19 advance by the Board or its designee. Respondent shall provide the approved course provider
20 with any information and documents that the approved course provider may deem pertinent.
21 Respondent shall participate in and successfully complete the classroom component of the course
22 not later than six (6) months after Respondent's initial enrollment. Respondent shall successfully
23 complete any other component of the course within one (1) year of enrollment. The medical
24 record keeping course shall be at Respondent's expense and shall be in addition to the Continuing
25 Medical Education (CME) requirements for renewal of licensure.

26 A medical record keeping course taken after the acts that gave rise to the charges in the
27 Accusation, but prior to the effective date of the Decision may, in the sole discretion of the Board
28 or its designee, be accepted towards the fulfillment of this condition if the course would have

1 been approved by the Board or its designee had the course been taken after the effective date of
2 this Decision.

3 Respondent shall submit a certification of successful completion to the Board or its
4 designee not later than 15 calendar days after successfully completing the course, or not later than
5 15 calendar days after the effective date of the Decision, whichever is later.

6 3. INVESTIGATION/ENFORCEMENT COST RECOVERY. Respondent is hereby
7 ordered to reimburse the Board its costs of investigation and enforcement, including, but not
8 limited to, expert review, amended accusations, legal reviews, investigation(s), and subpoena
9 enforcement, as applicable, in the amount of \$8,000 (eight thousand). Costs shall be payable to
10 the Medical Board of California. Failure to pay such costs shall be considered unprofessional
11 conduct and grounds for further discipline.

12 Payment must be made in full within 30 calendar days of the effective date of the Order, or
13 by a payment plan approved by the Medical Board of California. Any and all requests for a
14 payment plan shall be submitted in writing by respondent to the Board. Failure to comply with
15 the payment plan shall be considered a violation of probation.

16 The filing of bankruptcy by respondent shall not relieve respondent of the responsibility to
17 repay investigation and enforcement costs, including expert review costs (if applicable).

18 4. FUTURE ADMISSIONS CLAUSE. If Respondent should ever apply or reapply for
19 a new license or certification, or petition for reinstatement of a license, by any other health care
20 licensing action agency in the State of California, all of the charges and allegations contained in
21 Accusation No. 800-2020-073023 shall be deemed to be true, correct, and admitted by
22 Respondent for the purpose of any Statement of Issues or any other proceeding seeking to deny or
23 restrict license.

24 5. ENFORCEMENT

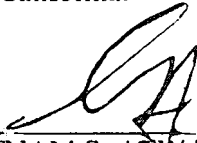
25 Failure to timely complete the course outlined above shall constitute unprofessional
26 conduct and is grounds for further disciplinary action.

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1 ACCEPTANCE

2 I have carefully read the above Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order and have fully
3 discussed it with my attorney, Dennis R. Thelen, Esq.. I understand the stipulation and the effect
4 it will have on my Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate. I enter into this Stipulated Settlement
5 and Disciplinary Order voluntarily, knowingly, and intelligently, and agree to be bound by the
6 Decision and Order of the Medical Board of California.

7
8 DATED: 3/6/24 
9 SATNAM S. ATWAL, M.D.
Respondent

10 I have read and fully discussed with Respondent Satnam S. Atwal, M.D. the terms and
11 conditions and other matters contained in the above Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order.
12 I approve its form and content.

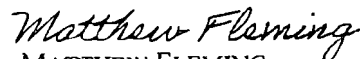
13 DATED: 3-5-24 
14 DENN IS. THELEN, ESQ.
Attorney for Respondent

15 ENDORSEMENT

16
17 The foregoing Stipulated Settlement and Disciplinary Order is hereby respectfully
18 submitted for consideration by the Medical Board of California.

19
20 DATED: 03/06/2024

Respectfully submitted,
21 ROB BONTA
Attorney General of California
22 STEVE DIEHL
Supervising Deputy Attorney General

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24 
25 MATTHEW FLEMING
Deputy Attorney General
26 Attorneys for Complainant

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Attorney General of California
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6 *Attorneys for Complainant*

7
8 **BEFORE THE**
MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
9 **DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS**
10 **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

11 In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

Case No. 800-2020-073023

12 **Satnam S. Atwal, M.D.**
13 **7055 N Chestnut Avenue, Ste. 101**
14 **Fresno, CA 93720**

A C C U S A T I O N

15 **Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate**
16 **No. A 45196,**

Respondent.

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18
19 **PARTIES**

20 1. Reji Varghese (Complainant) brings this Accusation solely in his official capacity as
21 the Executive Director of the Medical Board of California, Department of Consumer Affairs
22 (Board).

23 2. On or about August 15, 1988, the Medical Board issued Physician's and Surgeon's
24 Certificate Number A 45196 to Satnam S. Atwal, M.D. (Respondent). The Physician's and
25 Surgeon's Certificate was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought
26 herein and will expire on November 30, 2023, unless renewed.

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1 appropriate for that negligent diagnosis of the patient shall constitute a single
2 negligent act.

3 (2) When the standard of care requires a change in the diagnosis, act, or
4 omission that constitutes the negligent act described in paragraph (1), including, but
5 not limited to, a reevaluation of the diagnosis or a change in treatment, and the
6 licensee's conduct departs from the applicable standard of care, each departure
7 constitutes a separate and distinct breach of the standard of care.

8 (d) Incompetence.

9 (e) The commission of any act involving dishonesty or corruption that is
10 substantially related to the qualifications, functions, or duties of a physician and
11 surgeon.

12 (f) Any action or conduct that would have warranted the denial of a certificate.

13 (g) The failure by a certificate holder, in the absence of good cause, to attend
14 and participate in an interview by the board. This subdivision shall only apply to a
15 certificate holder who is the subject of an investigation by the board.

16 6. Section 2266 of the Code states: The failure of a physician and surgeon to maintain
17 adequate and accurate records relating to the provision of services to their patients constitutes
18 unprofessional conduct.

19 COST RECOVERY

20 7. Section 125.3 of the Code provides, in pertinent part, that the Board may request the
21 administrative law judge to direct a licensee found to have committed a violation or violations of
22 the licensing act to pay a sum not to exceed the reasonable costs of the investigation and
23 enforcement of the case, with failure of the licensee to comply subjecting the license to not being
24 renewed or reinstated. If a case settles, recovery of investigation and enforcement costs may be
25 included in a stipulated settlement.

26 FIRST CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

27 (Repeated Negligent Acts)

28 8. Respondent Satnam S. Atwal, M.D. is subject to disciplinary action under section
2234, subdivision (c), of the Code, in that he committed repeated acts of negligence in his care
and treatment of Patients 1 and 2.¹ The circumstances are as follows:

9. Between July 16, 2019, and November 24, 2020, Respondent appropriately
prescribed benzodiazepines to Patient 1 to treat the patient's anxiety. Respondent continued

¹ Patient names are redacted to protect their privacy.

1 Patient 1's clonazepam prescription that had been started by another provider. On or about
2 October 21, 2020, Respondent started Patient 1 on temazepam, 30 mg at bedtime. Respondent
3 failed to document an informed consent discussion, including a review with Patient 1 of the
4 relevant risks, benefits, and alternatives, prior to prescribing benzodiazepines, which are
5 controlled substances. Respondent's failure to document informed consent constitutes
6 negligence.

7 10. On or about November 12, 2018, Patient 2 first presented to Respondent and was
8 diagnosed with bipolar disorder and depression. On or about April 30, 2020, Respondent started
9 Patient 2 on the benzodiazepine alprazolam, 0.5 mg three times per day as needed, to treat panic
10 attacks. Respondent failed to document an informed consent discussion, including a review with
11 Patient 2 of the relevant risks, benefits, and alternatives, prior to prescribing a benzodiazepine.
12 Respondent's failure to document informed consent constitutes negligence.

13 **SECOND CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE**

14 **(Inadequate and Inaccurate Recordkeeping)**

15 11. Respondent is further subject to disciplinary action under section 2266 of the Code in
16 that he failed to maintain adequate and accurate medical records in his care and treatment of
17 Patients 1 and 2. The circumstances are set forth in paragraphs 9 and 10, above, which are
18 incorporated here by reference as if fully set forth.

19 **DISCIPLINARY CONSIDERATIONS**

20 12. To determine the degree of discipline, if any, to be imposed on Respondent Satnam S.
21 Atwal, M.D., Complainant alleges that on or about February 28, 2018, in a prior disciplinary
22 action titled Public Letter of Reprimand against Satnam S. Atwal, M.D. before the Medical Board
23 of California, in Case Number 800-2015-018264, Respondent's license was reprimanded for
24 failure to order or obtain baseline laboratory tests of a patient, failure to justify in writing
25 continuation of a maintenance medicine at a dose above the manufacturer's recommended dose,
26 and failure to include important written documentation in the medical records. That decision is
27 now final and is incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein.

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PRAYER

WHEREFORE, Complainant requests that a hearing be held on the matters herein alleged, and that following the hearing, the Medical Board of California issue a decision:

1. Revoking or suspending Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate Number A 45196, issued to Satnam S. Atwal, M.D.;
2. Revoking, suspending or denying approval of Satnam S. Atwal, M.D.'s authority to supervise physician assistants and advanced practice nurses;
3. Ordering Satnam S. Atwal, M.D., to pay the Board the costs of the investigation and enforcement of this case, and if placed on probation, the costs of probation monitoring; and
4. Taking such other and further action as deemed necessary and proper.

DATED: AUG 25 2023

JENNA JONES FOR
REJI VARGHESE
Executive Director
Medical Board of California
Department of Consumer Affairs
State of California
Complainant

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