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Sexually explicit Facebook messages get Columbus obstetrician in trouble

Physician one of two local doctors suspended by state board

By [Misti Crane](#) The Columbus Dispatch
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The State Medical Board voted yesterday to suspend the license of a Columbus obstetrician who exchanged sexually explicit Facebook messages with a patient.

In another case, the board suspended a doctor convicted of failing to report the sexual abuse of a 12-year-old girl.

In the Facebook case, Dr. Patrick E. Muffley, 43, who runs a solo practice called Embody Wellness Obstetrics and Gynecology, will have 30 days to care for existing patients before a minimum suspension of 60 days.

Muffley, who delivered the woman's twins and treated her postpartum depression, later accepted her "friend" request. Their conversations quickly took a sexual turn. Both said they never had a physical relationship.

The board regularly sees cases involving inappropriate physician-patient relationships, but this was the first involving social media.

"I failed to appreciate the danger of the slippery slope I placed myself upon" by accepting a friend request from a patient, Muffley told the board. Board members agreed that his actions amounted to sexual misconduct.

Dr. Anthony D. Zucco, 57, will be suspended for 180 days because of his March conviction on a misdemeanor count of failing to report child abuse while he was working for Premium Medical Care, an urgent-care company.

Zucco's current practice is in addiction medicine at 1430 S. High St.

He was working at an urgent care in Lancaster when a 12-year-old girl came in for treatment. An employee who took the patient's history told him the girl had been raped, according to board documents.

Zucco reportedly told the girl's mother she had come to the wrong place if her daughter was raped or abused and then left the two alone to "get their story straight."

The alleged assault involved a younger cousin who was never prosecuted, Zucco's attorney said.

The girl's mother, who reportedly didn't want her husband to hear about the situation, then said there was no abuse. She later went to authorities, which led to Zucco's conviction.

He served 10 days in jail and was ordered to perform 200 hours of community service.

The board initially considered permanently revoking his license, but board President Dr. Anita M. Steinbergh, of Westerville, proposed a shorter punishment. Because Zucco's specialty was anesthesiology, he might have been ill-prepared to handle the situation in the urgent care, she said.

The board agreed on the lesser punishment, though Robert Giacalone, a consumer member and Cardinal Health executive, voted against it.

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