



School of Medicine  
Office of the Dean

October 25, 1993

Harold J. Fallon, M.D.  
Dean, School of Medicine  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
UAB Station  
Birmingham, Alabama 35294-3293

Dear Dr. Fallon:

I am writing all of the medical school deans and all of the institutional sponsors of graduate medical education programs in the country in the hope that I may help you avoid a problem that we have just encountered. You may have heard about the difficulty Stony Brook recently ran into with a resident in our psychiatry training program named Michael Swango. Dr. Swango graduated from Southern Illinois Medical School in 1983. He began a surgical residency at Ohio State but was not reappointed after his PGY-1 year. He returned to his home in Illinois where, within a year or two, he was convicted of poisoning several of his co-workers while he was employed as a paramedic. Fortunately, none of his victims died. The episode gained a great deal of media attention at the time and was the subject of a segment on the national television program "20/20." In going back to review his activities at Ohio State, it is my understanding that the authorities in Ohio, following Dr. Swango's Illinois conviction, investigated several suspicious deaths that occurred during Dr. Swango's internship, although no criminal prosecution resulted.

He was given a maximum sentence of 5 years in the penitentiary for the poisoning of his coworkers in Illinois but was released early for "good behavior." The record is sparse for the next few years but he turned up again at the University of South Dakota as an internal medicine resident in 1992. Last winter the "20/20" program was re-broadcast on a local cable station and he was recognized by someone who knew him as a resident. On examining his application materials, officials at South Dakota determined that he had lied to gain entrance to the program and he was dismissed.

Last week, I got a call from Robert Talley, the dean at South Dakota, who had been informed that Swango may have turned up again, this time as a psychiatry resident at Stony Brook. Unfortunately, that was indeed the case. In reviewing our

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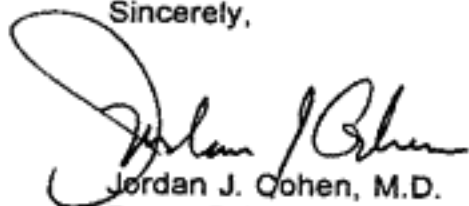
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records, I was chagrined to find that he had again conned very experienced faculty with outright lies about his past. He is an exceedingly charming young man who can weave a very convincing story that elicits sympathy and compassion.

I bring this matter to your attention because I think we must assume that he will try yet again to secure a residency position of some kind somewhere. I would recommend that you alert all of your training program directors and other responsible officials in your institution so that you may avoid the risk that we and others have been subjected to by this man. You should also be aware that Swango, who is 39 years old, has recently begun to use a different name, Jackson Michael Kirk. He has also used the name David Adams and, of course, may adopt still others.

I encourage you to call me at 516-444-2080 to further discuss the strange case of Dr. Swango.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan J. Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and end.

Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.  
Dean, School of Medicine