

**STATE OF TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
BEFORE THE TENNESSEE BOARD OF NURSING**

IN THE MATTER OF:)	
)	
GEOFFREY D. PETERSON,)	CASE NO. 2012022061
RESPONDENT)	
)	
DUNLAP, TN)	
A.P.N. CERTIFICATE NO. 6940)	
R.N. LICENSE NO. 98773)	

ORDER OF SUMMARY SUSPENSION

This cause came to be heard on the 27th day of January, 2015, at a public meeting, before the Tennessee Board of Nursing (“Board”), upon the application of the Division of Health Related Boards of the Tennessee Department of Health, (“Department”), for a summary suspension of Respondent’s license pursuant to T.C.A. § 4-5-320(c). The Department presented evidence that Geoffrey D. Peterson (“Respondent”) practiced nursing in violation of the provisions of T.C.A. § 63-7-101 *et seq.*

I. Jurisdiction

The Board is responsible for the regulation and supervision of the practice of nursing in the State of Tennessee. T.C.A. § 63-7-101, *et seq.* The Board has the duty and power to revoke, suspend, or otherwise discipline the license of a nurse who has violated the provisions of Title 63, Chapter 7, or any substantive rule promulgated under that chapter, or is guilty of unethical or unprofessional conduct. T.C.A. § 63-7-115. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 4-5-320(c), the Board has the authority to summarily suspend a license if it finds that the public health, safety, or welfare imperatively require emergency action.

II. Findings of Fact

1. Respondent was at all times pertinent hereto licensed by the Board as a registered nurse in the State of Tennessee, having been granted license number 98773 on March 22, 1994, which expires on October 31, 2015.

2. Respondent has been at all times pertinent hereto certified by the Board as an advanced practice nurse (“APN”) in the State of Tennessee, having been granted license number 6940, as well as a Certificate of Fitness to prescribe, on August 13, 2004, which expires on October 31, 2015.

3. Respondent is currently practicing with an unencumbered, unrestricted license.

4. Respondent has been practicing as an advanced practice nurse at two locations, including Holistic Health and Primary Care (“the pain clinic”), issued Pain Management Clinic Certificate #284, located in Hixson, Tennessee, owned by Respondent’s father, who is also Respondent’s supervising physician. Respondent’s other practice location is Hormone Replacement Specialists, also located in Hixson.

5. Respondent was arrested on December 19, 2014 and charged in the General Sessions Court of Sequatchie County with four counts of aggravated cruelty to animals, one count of cruelty to animals, and one count of felony possession of a Schedule II substance.

6. Upon entering the premises of Respondent’s residence on December 19, 2014 pursuant to a search warrant, officers of the Sequatchie County Sheriff’s Department found fifty-eight (58) animals, including dogs, cats, a pigeon, and a goat, living inside the home in deplorable conditions. The animals were being kept in crates, starved, and living in feces and urine.

7. In addition to the living animals, the officers' search of Respondent's kitchen freezer revealed two dead adult dogs, a dead possum, and a dead puppy, who was wrapped in a towel with a bow. Respondent also stored frozen human food in the same freezer, immediately adjacent to the dead animals.

8. While executing the search warrant, Sequatchie County Sheriff's Department discovered prefilled syringes of morphine, vials of morphine, shopping bags full of used needles, a bottle of prednisone, and a bottle of animal morphine. The syringes of morphine are of unknown origin with no identifying prescription information. In addition, a pipe with marijuana residue was discovered.

9. On December 20, 2014, an officer with McKamey Animal Services visited the pain clinic, located in Hamilton County, upon complaints of three emaciated dogs being maintained in exam rooms. This investigation was in addition to and separate from the pending criminal charges in Sequatchie County. Upon arrival, the officer could smell a strong odor of feces and urine prior to entering the facility. Upon entering the facility, the officer found three emaciated dogs being housed separately in the clinic's three exam rooms. The floors of the exam rooms were covered in urine stains and feces, and the dogs were removed from the clinic due to the conditions. During the time the officer was present at the pain clinic, several patients arrived at the clinic expecting to receive care from Respondent.

10. After obtaining a search warrant on December 23, 2014, McKamey Animal Services removed seven extremely emaciated dogs from 1324 Woodhill Drive, Chattanooga, Tennessee, a third location linked to Respondent. The animals were living in complete darkness with feces covering the floor and an overwhelming smell of feces and ammonia. When Animal Services searched this location, they discovered remains of fur and skin in an outline of a

deceased dog on the kitchen floor. The carcass had recently been removed as evidenced from the maggots that were still present.

11. Respondent is a top fifty prescriber in Tennessee based on morphine equivalents prescribed from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014. Respondent's letter of August 22, 2014 in response to being informed he was a top fifty prescriber indicated he had no intention of curbing his prescribing practices.

12. On January 12, 2015, Respondent obstructed a Department of Health investigation attempting to obtain information on a complaint against Respondent's license. Upon arrival of the Department investigator to Respondent's hormone replacement clinic, Respondent locked the door and proceeded to curse and scream at the investigator, refusing to allow entry into the clinic. Respondent appeared hostile during this encounter. The Department investigator requested to audit the pain clinic, which is located on the same street as the hormone replacement clinic. Respondent refused to allow access to either clinic or to cooperate in any fashion, leaving the Department unable to verify the conditions of the clinic or obtain patient charts to determine whether Respondent has a supervising physician or a medical director at the pain clinic.

13. The investigator then attempted to interview Respondent's supervising physician of record and father, Walter Peterson, M.D. at 6411 Camdendown Lane in Hixson, Tennessee on January 12, 2015. The investigator took a Hamilton County Sheriff's Department detective ("detective") to act as a witness and for safety reasons including his knowledge that Respondent possesses at least one firearm, Respondent's hostile behavior at the clinic, and Respondent's relationship with the supervising physician. Before the Department investigator could determine whether Dr. Peterson was present, Respondent arrived at the property. While the investigator

and detective were still inside their vehicle, Respondent approached the car and began pounding his fists on the driver's side window. Respondent continually yelled profanities and ordered the investigator off the property. Concerned for their safety, the investigator and detective moved to the roadside in front of the house, at which point they observed Respondent entering the residence from a side door. Chattanooga Police Department ("CPD") Officer J. Duggan was called to the Peterson residence to do a welfare check on Dr. Peterson, who is 88 years old, and after knocking repeatedly, no one answered the door.

14. On January 15, 2015, CPD sent two patrol units to the neighborhood of the Camdendown residence for a welfare check of Dr. Peterson. In speaking with neighbors, CPD was informed Dr. Peterson's condition is "frail." During the investigation, a concerned family friend stopped by the Peterson residence, asked if everything was alright, and proceeded to call Respondent on the phone. A CPD officer was handed the phone and Respondent stated that police would not be allowed inside the house without a court order or warrant.

15. Between January 12 and January 23, 2015, Adult Protective Services ("APS") unsuccessfully attempted to check on the welfare of Dr. Peterson on two separate occasions.

16. Respondent obstructed attempts by three independent agencies to determine the welfare of Dr. Peterson.

17. Multiple agencies obtained a warrant to enter Dr. Peterson's residence on January 23, 2015. As a result of Dr. Peterson's poor condition, he was transported to the hospital for further evaluation. On the same date, Chattanooga Police Department issued an arrest warrant for Geoffrey Deane Peterson for "wilful abuse, neglect of an adult."

III. Conclusions of Law

The facts above are sufficient to establish violations by Respondent of the following statutes or rules which are part of the provisions of the Tennessee Nursing Practice Act (Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-7-101, *et seq.*), for which disciplinary action before and by the Board of Nursing is authorized:

18. The findings of fact in paragraphs one (1) through seventeen (17) constitute a violation of Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-7-115(a)(1), Respondent:

(C) Is unfit or incompetent by reason of negligence, habits or other cause;

* * *

(F) Is guilty of unprofessional conduct;

* * *

(G) Has violated or attempted to violate, directly or indirectly, or assisted in or abetted the violation of or conspired to violate any provision of this chapter or any lawful order of the board issued pursuant thereto[.]

IV. Policy Statement

The Tennessee Board of Nursing has a duty to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Tennessee. Respondent's apparent impaired judgment combined with the high amount of controlled substances he prescribes and unsanitary conditions of his practice create an extreme and untenable danger to his patients and the public of Tennessee. Respondent's actions constitute a serious and immediate danger to the public's health, safety and welfare and require emergency action by this Board.

V. Suspension

In consideration of the evidence presented, and pursuant to the authority granted under T.C.A. § 4-5-320(c), T.C.A. § 63-7-115, and the Rules of the Board, Chapters 1000-01-.01, *et seq.* and 1000-04-.01, *et seq.*, the Board hereby preliminarily finds that the misconduct of

Respondent, **Geoffrey Deane Peterson**, is so severe that it imperatively requires emergency action in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare prior to the initiation of formal disciplinary charges.

It is therefore **ORDERED** that:

19. Respondent's registered nurse license, License No. 98773, is hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDED**.

20. Respondent's Tennessee advanced practice nurse license, Certificate No. 6940, and Certificate of Fitness to prescribe are hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDED**.

21. Upon receipt of this Order, Respondent shall cease and desist from practicing nursing in the state of Tennessee.

22. This suspension shall be effective immediately and shall remain in effect until the conclusion of the contested case hearing against Respondent or until otherwise ordered by the Tennessee Board of Nursing.

23. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 4-5-320(d), Respondent has a right to present his version of the situation to the Board at an informal conference. Dan Warlick, counsel for Respondent, appeared at the hearing before this panel on January 27, 2015 and stated he would accept service of the summary suspension order on behalf of Respondent, and stated Respondent was waiving his right to an informal hearing. By motion, the Board accepted Respondent's waiver.

24. The Board strongly encourages Respondent to obtain a comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment from a program or facility such as the Vanderbilt Comprehensive Assessment Program ("VCAP") and to follow the referrals and/or treatment recommendations made by the assessment. Completing this assessment may not result in the suspension of Respondent's license being lifted.

* * *

So **ORDERED** by the Tennessee Board of Nursing, this 27th day of January, 2015.



Chairperson/Acting Chairperson
Tennessee Board of Nursing

Approved for Entry:

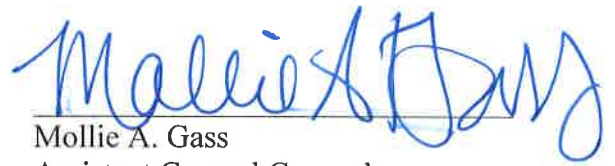


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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I do hereby certify that a true and exact copy of the forgoing has been served via hand delivery upon the following on the 27th day of January, 2015:

Dan Warlick
Attorney at Law
611 Commerce Street, Suite 2712
Nashville, TN 37203



Mollie A. Gass
Assistant General Counsel