



CONDUCT COUNTS!

PROFESSIONALISM & COMMUNICATION

SCENARIO

Although new to the Respiratory Therapy profession, Demetry (the “Member”) had plenty of experience working in healthcare, having been a physician’s assistant for the past 15 years. Demetry strongly admired the work of Respiratory Therapists and pursued schooling to equip him with the needed knowledge and skills to practice the profession. Demetry was soon hired at Green Valley Hospital (the “Facility”) and was a quick learner who breezed through the orientation sessions and was eager to hit the hospital floors and provide patient care.

A couple weeks into practicing, Demetry was presented with a Patient who went into respiratory failure. Flustered, wanting to help the patient, yet not knowing exactly what to do, he rushed through checking the Patient’s oxygen levels and barked to the nurse who was assisting him that she should “increase the oxygen and up their pain meds”.

The Patient’s father was sitting in the room while this exchange unfolded and was completely aghast. The Patient’s father asked Demetry what they were doing, Demetry said nothing, raising their arms above their head, shrugging their shoulders, and then left the Patient’s room.

RESULTS

The College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (the “CRTO”) received a complaint from the Patient’s father, stating that the Member was completely unprofessional and must come before the CRTO for review. A Panel of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC) of the CRTO conducted an investigation into Demetry’s conduct to determine if Demetry committed acts of professional misconduct.

The investigation included obtaining documentation from the Facility, interview statements from the complainant, the Member, and witnesses. The Member was asked to respond to the complaint, and the complainant was asked to respond to the Member’s version of events. The Member was somewhat remorseful, stating that in the moment they probably didn’t respond as professionally as they should have, and offered an apology to the complainant and the Patient.

Based on the information before them, The Panel ordered issued advice and recommendations to Demetry.



PROFESSIONALISM

“Professionalism” or professional conduct is a term often used to describe the behaviours that are expected of individuals who hold a certain role in society. A “professional” is typically someone who has obtained skills that are recognized as requiring specific, intensive training and who applies those skills in a position impacting others (e.g., engineer, lawyer, RT, PT, MD, etc.). Professionals are often held to moral, ethical and legal standards because of this potential impact.



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EXPECTATION

The panel of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee felt that Demetry's conduct contravened the Standards of Practice, including:

Standard 2: Collaboration / Interprofessional Collaboration

- a. Work collaboratively with patients/clients, healthcare team members, and community partners to set goals, promote shared decision-making, and facilitate patient/client centred care.
- b. Communicate and interact with patients/clients, healthcare team members, and others in a manner that demonstrates respect, dignity, and appreciation of individual differences and opinions.

Standard 3: Communication

- c. Demonstrate professionalism and respect in all forms of communication (e.g., verbal, non-verbal, written, social media).
- h. Document every patient/client interaction in a timely manner, using the most suitable format.

Standard 13: Professional Responsibilities

Responsibilities to the CRTO

- b. Assume responsibility and accountability for their own actions and decisions
- g. Must not contravene, or fail to maintain, a standard of practice of the profession or a published standard of the CRTO

Responsibilities to the Profession and the Public

- c. Are responsible and accountable for meeting all legal and ethical requirements of the profession (e.g., obtaining valid orders)
- d. Demonstrate integrity, objectivity, and compassion in their relationships with patients/clients, healthcare team members, students, and others
- m. Behave in a professional manner that presents a positive image of Respiratory Therapy to the community

The Panel was of the opinion that while Demetry was "new" to the profession, they are expected to conduct themselves using their knowledge, skill and judgement, in order to provide the best patient care possible. Moreover, it is expected that Demetry considers how the Patient and their support system may be feeling under times of stress. While the clinical setting is familiar to Demetry, the Patient and their family rely upon professionalism and exemplary communication from healthcare professionals so that they are confident and feel assured from the care they are receiving.

Carrying out your role and responsibilities, particularly when patients are expecting this of you, is integral to a patient's trust and expectations of a Respiratory Therapist and the CRTO's expectations.

While Demetry may not have intended to cause any harm to the Patient or come across as unprofessional, the complainant felt otherwise, and the Panel was assured that writing advice and recommendations to Demetry would emphasize the seriousness of his conduct, remind Demetry of their professional obligations, and reflect upon the events that led Demetry coming before the Panel. The Panel was hopeful that Demetry learns from this situation and improves their professionalism and communication skills for the betterment of patient care in Ontario.

BOTTOM LINE

Respiratory Therapists are expected to conduct themselves with decency, honesty, and integrity. This includes professionalism and exemplary communication.

RESOURCES

[CRTO Standards of Practice](#)