

April 7, 2014

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Mr. Raymond Pisani, LRT  
Chair, Advisory Comm. on Respiratory Care  
204 Tournament Blvd.  
Berwick, LA 70342

RE: PERFORMANCE OF BLOOD GAS ANALYSES  
BY LICENSED RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS

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Dear Mr. Pisani:

During its March 2014 meeting the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (the "Board") considered the request of its Advisory Committee on Respiratory Therapy for a definitive statement of its opinion as to whether or not the scope of respiratory therapy practice in this state includes the analysis of arterial blood gases on blood gas instrumentation analyzers by respiratory therapists. As we understand, the Committee's request was prompted by information indicating that hospital inspecting agencies may be acting under the belief that respiratory therapists may draw, but not analyze, arterial blood gas samples.

The Board asked that I acknowledge and thank you for your letter of February 5, 2014, and advise you that it has been its long-held view that the practice of respiratory care in Louisiana includes blood gases analyses performed by respiratory therapists on blood gas instrumentation at the point of care, when conducted on the written prescription or verbal order of a licensed physician (or physician assistant or advanced practice registered nurse).<sup>1</sup>

In such instances, the Board would expect that a respiratory therapist would be appropriately trained and qualified in the use of the equipment and that the equipment would be maintained by the hospital or facility's clinical laboratory and in compliance of all quality control measures.

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<sup>1</sup>*Respiratory therapy*, as defined by Louisiana law, La. Rev. Stat. §37:3353(5)(1)(i), includes, among other items, the: (1) Performance of specific procedures and diagnostic testing relative to respiratory therapy that are ordered by a physician, advanced practice registered nurse, or physician assistant to assist in diagnosis, monitoring, treatment, and research, including:

(i) Drawing arterial, venous, and capillary blood samples and other body fluids for analysis to determine laboratory values to be performed on blood gas instrumentation.

Mr. Raymond Pisani, LRT  
Apr. 7, 2014  
Page 2

Conversely, the scope of respiratory practice does not encompass the performance of blood gas analyses for any reason on non-respiratory therapy patients, or other than on the verbal or written order of a physician (or a physician assistant or advanced practice registered nurse).

The Board's opinion will be communicated to Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals/Health Standards Section and the Louisiana Hospital Association.

We trust that the above is responsive to your request. If not, please let us know.

Very truly yours,

**LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF  
MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

By:

Rita Arceneaux  
*Confidential Executive Assistant*