

LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

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January 22, 2014

Re: Advisory Opinion-Scope of
Respiratory Practice

At its most recent meeting the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (the "Board") considered your request for information as to whether the scope of practice of a respiratory therapist includes: (1) PICC (peripherally inserted central catheter) line insertion; (2) venous line insertion; and (3) drawing venous blood.

The Board asked that I acknowledge your inquiry of October 28, 2013 and inform you that pursuant to the Louisiana Respiratory Therapy Practice Act, La. Rev. Stat. §§37:3351-3361 (the "Law"), "respiratory therapy" is defined to include a number of activities conducted upon the written prescription or verbal order of a physician (or advanced practice registered nurse or physician assistant) and under a physician's direction and supervision including, among other items: "insertion and care of peripheral arterial lines;" "drawing arterial, venous, and capillary blood samples and other body fluids for analysis to determine laboratory values to be performed on blood gas instrumentation;" and "starting of intravenous lines for the purposes of administering fluids pertinent to the practice of respiratory therapy in a special procedure area under the order of a physician . . ."¹

Accordingly, the Board is of the view that that the insertion of PICC lines does not fall within the scope of respiratory therapy as defined by the Law and may not be performed by respiratory therapists in this state. Conversely, insertion of venous lines and drawing venous blood samples, fall within the scope of practice of respiratory care and thus may be performed by a respiratory therapist licensed to practice in this state who is

¹La. Rev. Stat. §373553(5)(d), (l)(i), (l)(v), respectively.

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properly trained, qualified and credentialed by a hospital to perform the procedure upon the written prescription or verbal order of a physician or other authorized practitioner.

However, the performance of these activities by respiratory therapists is limited to the scope of practice of respiratory therapy which, in turn, is at all times limited to the care of respiratory care patients on the order of a physician (or other authorized provider). It would be unlawful, that is, for a respiratory therapist to place a venous line in, or draw venous blood samples from, a non-respiratory therapy patient. It would also be inappropriate for a respiratory therapist to draw blood (by arterial, venous, capillary or otherwise) for any purpose other than for analysis to determine laboratory values to be performed on blood gas instrumentation on respiratory therapy patients.

We trust that the above is responsive to your inquiry.

Very truly yours,

**LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF
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By: 
Rita Arceneaux
Confidential Executive Assistant