

State speaks on former surgeon

Alleges unprofessional conduct by Cornu-Labat

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The Department of Health has alleged that Gaston Cornu-Labat, a former Quincy Valley Medical Center surgeon, engaged in unprofessional conduct by failing to comply with the Medical Quality Assurance Commission's order for an investigative mental examination.

The allegation was made in a statement of charges posted on the Department of Health's website last week.

Cornu-Labat was fired as surgeon at the hospital in October 2009 after he refused to undergo a mental evaluation by the Washington Physicians Health Program. Cornu-Labat said he didn't trust the program, which offers anonymous evaluations and treatment of medical providers for mental health and substance-abuse issues so they can return to practice. He instead submitted the results of four psychological evaluations that he commissioned on his own. When QVMC did not accept the evaluations provided by Cornu-Labat, he then referred his case to the Department of Health.

ADVERTISEMENT Cornu-Labat stated last December that he made the referral "to see if they consider necessary any further evaluation of my person for which I am at their disposition."

In a statement e-mailed to the Post-Register on Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2010, Cornu-Labat stated he has agreed to go to a settlement hearing with the Medical Quality Assurance Commission (MQAC).

"At this point the Medical Quality Assurance Commission (DOH) has insisted several times on me agreeing to go to them for a settlement hearing," he wrote. "I have finally agreed to this despite my clearly expressed concerns about this new development being another instance where I will be further dog-eared and dragged through never-ending procedures simply stirred towards wearing me and my family out and discourage me from bringing to light the truth of the matter. We have suffered enough."

Cornu-Labat alleges that the Department of Health investigators are incompetent or are participating in a cover-up with the Quincy Valley Medical Center.

"At this point it is evident that what complicated the matters even further is the fact that the negligence present at QVMC reflects on DOH performance as the regulatory agency," stated Cornu-Labat. "Either this and the consequent perceived need to cover it up or just the sheer incompetence and inefficiency of the few DOH employees involved in this case has made this drag on for 14 months with complete disregard from their part for the profound damages all this has implied to my professional career and mine and my family's well being."

Quincy Valley Medical Center administrator Mehdi Merred said the Department of Health's statement of allegations supports the conclusion QVMC reached last year regarding Cornu-Labat.

"I'm glad to see the Department of Health has reached the same conclusion that QVMC has reached," Merred said. "Let us not forget he has chosen the Department of Health to be the arbitrator in this matter. On Dec. 10, 2009, he stated that he has intended to be at their disposition and his actions are now in contradiction with his statements. It is important to remember that we went above and beyond for him not to be in that situation. He is the one who chose to go to the Department of Health."

Cornu-Labat stated his mental health is not an issue and he is being retaliated against for standing up for his rights.

"Despite what has been stated in the Statement of Charges issued by MQAC," he wrote, "the issue has never been my refusal to submit to a mental health evaluation when in fact I have had four evaluations done by idoneous and recognized professionals that clearly establish that there is absolutely nothing wrong with my mental health. I have never refused the evaluations but have remained firm all along in standing for my rights and have refused to submit to capricious and abusive impositions backed by a most abusive and unprofessional attitude of imposing 'because I say so' and flexing muscle."

Despite his concerns, Cornu-Labat said he will continue with the MQAC proceedings.

"I am willing to continue with these proceedings with MQAC at this point because I have said everything that needed to be said and I have provided all the documentation that needed to be provided and I am putting myself at their disposition so as to help clarify any aspect of this situation that has not been clearly understood for the sake of reaching the truth of this situation once and for all," Cornu-Labat said.

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