

December 4, 2014

Re: OSC File No. D1-13-2396

Re: OSC File No. D1-09-3272

Mr. President,

My name is Dr. Susan Marie Yeager, DPM. I have specialized in limb preservation and wound care for our veterans and now our general public. I have been employed through the VA for over 11 years. I started as a Podiatric Surgical resident at Tuskegee, Alabama Veterans Hospital. From that experience I climbed the ranks and have since worked at Orlando/Tampa VA and Jackson MS VA. Moving up to Chief of Podiatry at the North Florida South Georgia Veterans Affairs my final years. I have lectured at numerous conferences' and I even got commissioned in the U.S. Naval reserves as a Lieutenant that is how much I believed in the system. In addition, I have invented medical devices that can be used in new ways to treat wounds, burns, and cancer.

I chose a life of medicine after having had several traumatic events happen to my family and sister. My sister had third degree burns as a seven year old on her hands and face and went through countless surgeries and years of rehab after a house fire. After watching her go through this I saw how a good doctor and nurse can give hope back to a family that had lost everything. Unfortunately while my sister was fighting for her life in the ICU we had to bury my 8 year old brother that had not survived the fire. Not long after that we lost my other brother that was eighteen years old in a car accident at the hands of a drunk driver. Throughout the course of years I saw the best of what healthcare providers can do to those in need.

I was the first whistleblower in regards to "bloody surgical instruments" at Jackson, MS Veterans Affairs Hospital. At that time I was afraid to speak or disclose who I was out of fear of reprisal back then.

Since my first complaint in 2006 at Jackson VA, I have been harassed in many forms including verbally abused by staff and have gone without proper raises and bonuses. I have endured countless investigations and false allegations. I have endured 7 years of pure agony working at our VA hospitals and continue to fight to this day.

For Example, when I was at the Jackson VA as I constantly was called names and harassed. I would carry bloody surgical trays back to sterilization because they were unusable and people expected me to operate with them. They would then proceed and call me names and yell at me. Their goal was to harass me so I would just go along and use the dirty equipment on patients. Most providers used the equipment because they did not want to endure the harassment. Some days I would have to walk down to the sterilization department multiple times knowing the abuse I was going to endure. It was the longest walk I ever had to do. The only way I could stand strong and hold my ground for so long is that I saw innocent veterans that were entrusting me. I knew those bloody surgical instruments would infect patients. I did the long walk down to SPD and took the abuse over and over because I knew I had to stop it and someone had to stand up and tell them it is wrong to knowingly infect patients.

I took so much abuse every day. I was not allowed time off or breaks when I needed them. I have worked with large cockroaches coming out the walls. Not one or two roaches, but 25 or more at a given

time. I have worked without proper forms of suction equipment. At times blood from patient's having surgery would run off the table and down my leg. All too often at all facilities my clinic would have bloody and dirty dressings, overflowing trash containers, and sharp containers overflowing with needles. I have worked without basic eye protection and had injuries to the eye. I have had no soap, nor paper towels at times to wash my hands. Basic medical equipment was missing at facilities throughout the years.

What I have seen at all facilities is that management goes to any lengths to get the performance measures and bonuses and everything else goes by the wayside. When it comes to this last investigation; it is a simple case of management allowing the forging of my name to get bonuses.

The reason why they did this is simple "money". We were backlogged at least 360 consults (which are pending patients waiting to be seen). Instead of hiring another doctor the management team came up with the idea to cancel all the consults and then place them on a paper list in a clerk's drawer. Podiatry is a performance measure clinic which means if we do not see patients within 30 days the upper management will not get bonuses. So instead of doing the right thing and showing patients true wait time (usually 6-9 months). The management team canceled consults and placed the names in a drawer. Which I can ensure many names never made it out of that drawer.

I was pretty wise to what they were up to since this was not my first VA facility I had worked at. I was not willing to place any names in a drawer. Since I would not go along with the plan they enlisted my nurse Karen Scheil to sign my name electronically on the consults. Which involved cancelling them and then placing them in the drawer. I knew exactly what they were doing and I did inform management that canceling all the consults and not seeing the patients was wrong. It did not end there, the management team also had Karen Scheil to see patients while I was on leave and sign my name electronically. When I learned of this I was outraged and informed managers and asked for it to stop. I requested it be investigated which neither thing happened and nothing was done. They only became more embolden in their tactics.

I have attached emails showing I objected to this. To sign a doctor's name for anything is illegal.

This is a simple case where The North Florida South Georgia Veterans Affairs management allowed staff to forge my name for their own financial gain and nothing else. I want to make it very clear; at no time did I give any person or government agency the permission to sign, copy or reproduce my signature in any form. They committed forgery which is a felony in all 50 states.

The ones to hold accountable are Joleen Clark VISN 16 Director, I know she directly gave the order to cancel all consults, Dr. Bradley Bender (Chief of staff) had knowledge and emails. Dr. Kenneth Donahoe was in charge of the clinic and was constantly aware and told Karen Scheil RN how to move consults. Dawn Baker had clerks place patients names that were waiting in drawers. Finally, Karen Scheil RN for actually going along with and forging my name hundreds of times over. There most likely were many others but I know without a shadow of a doubt all of this people listed above were directly involved in the process.

The end result was veterans were not seen and management got huge bonuses. One thing I have learned being a whistleblower in the VA is most employees will pretty much do anything for a paycheck. I have been told to look the other way and just get your paycheck and go home. What stops me is I think

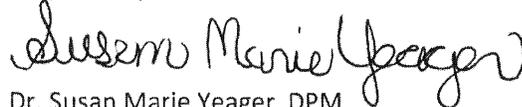
of the ripple effect that this can cause a veterans family. One veteran does not get needed care and gets ill. It is not just the veteran but also that veteran's family and friends that pay the price.

I have paid a heavy price but, I can go to bed at night knowing that thousands of veteran's everyday will not get infected from soiled instruments and I hope I can also say that veterans will get seen in a timely manner. The only way to do this is hold the ones that did this accountable. Because let's be honest we all know what is right, but doing it is a lot harder.

Finally, I wanted to inform you that I have worked with Office of Special Counsel for several years now and without them nothing would ever change. I no longer work for the federal government so I can speak with candor. OSC needs more funding and to be much larger because they are the only ones willing to speak the truth and really improve agencies. They are the only ones willing to ask the hard questions.

I am entrusting you will do the right thing and see these parties responsible will face justice and be held accountable for their actions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Marie Yeager". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Susan Marie Yeager, DPM