

College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia
Public Notice under s. 39.3 of the Health Professions Act

Stephen Witvoet, RPT

Location: Vernon, BC

Date of Action: March 26, 2020

Nature of Action: Mr. Witvoet entered into a consent agreement with the Inquiry Committee of the College agreeing to the following terms:

1. a reprimand for sexually assaulting multiple female patients;
2. immediate cancellation of his registration with the College;
3. a prohibition from applying to the College for reinstatement for a period of four (4) years; and
4. in the event a future application for reinstatement is granted¹, the following permanent limits being imposed on his ability to practice:
 - a. a prohibition from treating female patients; and
 - b. a prohibition from engaging in a sole and/or solo practice without the supervision of other College registrants.

Reasons: The College commenced multiple investigations into allegations from various sources that Mr. Witvoet engaged in sexual misconduct with female patients. These sources included public complaints, a statutory report and notice from the Vernon RCMP that Mr. Witvoet was under criminal investigation and subsequently charged with sixteen (16) counts of sexual assault contrary to section 271 of the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

During its investigations, the Inquiry Committee monitored the status of the criminal proceedings against Mr. Witvoet. On October 24, 2019, Mr. Witvoet pled guilty to sexually assaulting nine (9) female patients while providing physical therapy services to them. The remaining criminal charges were stayed.

This conduct represents a gross departure from the College's practice standards, which require appropriate professional boundaries and prohibit all forms of sexual misconduct. Given the seriousness of Mr. Witvoet's misconduct and the fact that there were multiple victims, the Inquiry Committee determined to resolve the investigations by proposing a consent agreement under sections 33(6)(c) and 36(1) of the *Health Professions Act* to secure an expedited cancellation of Mr. Witvoet's registration with the College and other terms to ensure public safety.

As cancellation of registration is the most stringent action that the College can take, the Inquiry Committee is satisfied that this action will protect the public.

¹ Under section 49 of the College Bylaws, Mr. Witvoet may only be reinstated if he is able to: (a) meet the requirements for registration under the Bylaws, (b) satisfy the registration committee that his registration will not pose an undue risk to public health or safety, and (c) satisfy the registration committee that his registration will not otherwise be contrary to the public interest.