

ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

MR WILLIAM WYLIE SIM

FINDINGS

Application for restoration - 10 December. 2007.

Mr Sim appeared before the Committee without legal representation.

Counsel for the College reviewed Mr. Sim's previous appearances before Disciplinary Committees.

Mr. Sim appeared before the Committee to seek restoration of his name to the Veterinary Register. Mr. Sim appeared first before a Disciplinary Committee on 18th. July 2005, having been convicted of being involved in a road accident when the level of alcohol in his breath exceeded the prescribed limit, leading to a sentence of three months imprisonment, and disqualification from driving for three years, reduced to 27 months on completion of a drink-driving rehabilitation course. He was also charged with being under the influence of alcohol whilst carrying out his duties as a veterinary surgeon on 8 separate occasions between 2003 and 2005. Mr Sim admitted all the charges, and that he was thereby guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

At that time the hearing was adjourned to allow Mr Sim to participate in an alcoholic treatment programme. Mr. Sim also agreed to abide by certain conditions, including complete abstinence from use of intoxicating liquor.

He appeared again before the Committee on January 30th 2006. On this occasion there were further charges that Mr. Sim had misled both the College and the earlier hearing, in stating that the road accident related to his manoeuvring his vehicle in a car park, when in fact it was on a public road, and another vehicle had been involved. The Committee found these

charges proved, and decided that they amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

On that occasion the Committee postponed judgment for two years, on specific conditions, including that he should not consume alcohol and should provide verifiable evidence gathered over a significant timescale that he had been able to abstain from alcohol. He was also required to provide evidence of continuing professional development (“CPD”).

Following an adverse report from the doctor (Dr. Heston) supervising his progress, the Committee reconvened the hearing. Mr Sim admitted that he had succumbed to his alcohol addiction, and, on 9th November 2006, the Committee ordered the removal of his name from the Register. The Committee renewed its advice, in terms similar to those given at the previous hearing, to Mr Sim, as to the issues that he had to address before an application for restoration of his name could be successful. The principal conditions were to provide verifiable evidence of his continued abstinence, and of continued CPD.

The substantive evidence provided by Mr Sim in support of his application included various laboratory reports on eight blood samples provided by him, over a period of thirteen months. All but one of these showed acceptable levels of both biochemistry and haematology values. Mr. Sim did not provide expert interpretation of these results. He also submitted a letter from his general practitioner which briefly documented his progress, but made reference to a significant lapse into drinking for four weeks prior to 13th November 2007. The GP wrote that Mr Sim told him that he knew of no trigger for this relapse. Mr Sim admitted to the Committee that, on 27th October 2007, he had agreed to attend an informal gathering at a restaurant, which included several friends, when he had been pressed into consuming alcohol. Mr Sim called a witness, Mr D Hoggard, who verified the facts of this incident, as set out in his letter to the Committee dated 6th December 2007. Mr Hoggard accepted responsibility for persuading Mr Sim to drink alcohol on that occasion, but stated that he was unaware of his alcoholism. This was the start of a significant bout of drinking to excess. Mr Sim submitted that this was an isolated incident which served to convince him, he said, that he ran the risk of death if he were to drink “ever again”.

Mr Sim also submitted a copy of his application for restoration of his driving licence, to the DVLA which asked specific questions which were alcohol-related. In answer to questions

from the Committee he conceded that his answers to the relevant questions were incorrect, despite the fact that he signed the application form, certifying the answers to be correct.

Mr Sim told the Committee that he desperately needed to find a job to give him a reason for living and to provide a much needed source of income. He had received an offer of a position as a veterinary supervisor for international equine transport duties. He also said he had no intention or desire to re-enter general veterinary practice, and was prepared to offer an undertaking not to do so. However, the Committee is conscious of the fact that it has no power to impose conditions when reinstating a member to the Register.

In making its decision the Committee has to consider the evidence put forward by Mr Sim, whose duty it is to provide sufficient evidence to satisfy the Committee on the balance of probabilities that he is a fit and proper person to be restored to the Veterinary Register.

DECISION

The Disciplinary Committee has a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of animals and clients, and to maintain the reputation of the veterinary profession.

The Committee noted that Mr Sim failed to comply with the undertakings given to the Committee on 31 January 2006 to abstain from alcohol. This led to his name being removed from the Register following the hearing on 9 November 2006.

The Committee was very concerned to note that Mr Sim had succumbed to alcohol almost immediately after making this application for reinstatement. The Committee is also disturbed by the apparent lack of honesty evinced by his signed application form for restoration of his driving licence.

In the result, the Committee was not persuaded that Mr Sim had provided any substantive and verifiable evidence from a suitably qualified person that he had abstained from alcohol since his name was removed from the Register. In fact, the admitted evidence established that he lapsed into a significant spell of binge drinking between the date of this application and this hearing. Although Mr Sim assured the Committee that he will never drink again, the Committee concluded that there was no sufficient and reliable evidence from which this could reasonably be inferred.

The Committee has every sympathy with Mr Sim's difficulties, but advises him to seek professional help in establishing a structured recovery plan. Mr. Sim's application is therefore dismissed.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

10 DECEMBER 2007