

Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board
PRESS RELEASE

Suspension of Registration as TCM Physician

Mr Lee Miing Chong (李明聰) is a registered Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Practitioner. At all material times, Mr Lee practised at Royal Acupuncture Specialist Centre, located at Blk 125, Lorong 1 Toa Payoh, #01-545, Singapore 310125 (the “Premises”).

2 On 3 April 2017, a complaint, by way of a statutory declaration, was lodged with the TCM Practitioners Board (the “Board”) against Mr Lee alleging professional misconduct and negligence (the “Complaint”). Among other comorbidities, the Complainant has a medical history of diabetes and poor sensation in both feet. The Complaint relates to two consultations where Mr Lee had administered TCM treatment.

3 The Complainant alleged, amongst other things, that during one consultation with Mr Lee on 3 January 2015, Mr Lee had prescribed and administered TCM treatment in the form of using a heat lamp on the soles of both of the Complainant’s feet (the “Heat Lamp Treatment”). After the treatment, the Complainant developed blisters on the soles of his feet and when the Complainant stepped on the ground and started walking, the blisters burst and fluid flowed out. The Complainant immediately returned to the Premises, and Mr Lee cleaned the Complainant’s wounds, applied medication and bandaged his feet with gauze. Later that night, the Complainant developed a high fever which persisted until 4 January 2015.

4 On 4 January 2015, the Complainant consulted Mr Lee as he felt unwell. Mr Lee administered acupuncture and electric pulse treatment on him. The Complainant’s condition did not improve and the condition of his feet worsened. Subsequently, the Complainant was admitted to the hospital for severe burn wounds on his feet. Due to the Complainant’s diabetes and other comorbidities, the wounds on his feet did not heal. Instead, his condition worsened and he eventually had to undergo below knee amputation of his left leg.

5 Following the Complaint and subsequent to reviewing the Written Explanation provided by Mr Lee, an Investigation Committee (“IC”) inquiry was convened by the Board to investigate the Complaint. After completing its investigations, the IC made the following findings in respect of the Complaint:

- (a) The Heat Lamp Treatment administered by Mr Lee on the Complainant was, by itself, an appropriate and generally accepted method of TCM treatment for the Complainant’s condition of general weakness and chills.
- (b) However, Mr Lee failed to explain and inform the Complainant about the risks of the Heat Lamp Treatment or other available treatment options, in

breach of Clauses 4.2.2 and 4.2.4(a) of the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines for TCM practitioners (the “**Ethical Code**”).

(c) Mr Lee failed to take adequate precautions and care when administering the Heat Lamp Treatment to avoid inflicting burns or injury to the Complainant’s feet. Prior to the Heat Lamp Treatment, the Complainant told Mr Lee that both his feet had poor sensation and asked Mr Lee to be careful when administering the said treatment. Based on an objective assessment of the evidence, the IC found that Mr Lee placed the heat lamp too close to the soles of the Complainant’s feet and for an extended period of time. The Complainant’s burns were caused by the Heat Lamp Treatment and Mr Lee had failed to provide competent management and care of the Complainant, in breach of Clauses 4.1.1(e) and 4.1.1(f) of the Ethical Code.

(d) After the Complainant suffered thermal burn injuries to the soles of his feet, Mr Lee failed to render appropriate and generally accepted method of TCM treatment to him on 3 January 2015 and 4 January 2015. Given the seriousness of the Complainant’s injuries which was evident from the fluid-filled blisters, Mr Lee should have called for an ambulance, or at least advised the Complainant to seek immediate medical attention. Instead, Mr Lee proceeded to administer the acupuncture and electric impulse treatment on the Complainant on 4 January 2015. In this regard, Mr Lee caused a delay in the Complainant seeking appropriate medical treatment for his burn injury. By his conduct, Mr Lee failed to administer appropriate or generally accepted methods of TCM, in contravention of Clauses 4.1.1(e) and 4.1.1(f) of the Ethical Code.

(e) Following the aforesaid determinations, the IC was of the unanimous view that Mr Lee’s conduct amounted to professional misconduct and/or negligence in breach of Section 19(1)(i) of the TCM Practitioners Act (Cap. 333A) (the “**Act**”).

6 While the IC took in account that Mr Lee was a first time offender, it also considered the following factors to be relevant in deciding its recommendations to the Board:

- (a) the serious nature of Mr Lee’s negligence and professional misconduct;
- (b) the severe outcome suffered by the Complainant (who had to undergo below knee amputation);
- (c) Mr Lee’s attempt during the inquiry to shift the blame for the severe outcome to the Complainant; and
- (d) the complete lack of remorse on the part of Mr Lee and his fabrication of untruths during the inquiry hearing.

7 Having regard to the foregoing, the Board has decided to impose the following sanctions against Mr Lee pursuant to Section 19(2) of the Act:

- (a) a suspension of Mr Lee's registration as a TCM physician for a period of 3 years;
- (b) a financial penalty of S\$5,000.00; and
- (c) a censure.

8 Pursuant to Section 20(1) of the Act, the Board has also directed Mr Lee to pay for all costs and expenses of and incidental to the inquiry conducted and action taken against him.

9 The Board wishes to emphasise that the safety of patients is of paramount importance when registered TCM practitioners prescribe and administer TCM treatments to their patients. In particular, the Board advises TCM practitioners to exercise great care and prudence when prescribing and/or administering heat treatments on patients with diabetes. A TCM practitioner would be required to take adequate precautions in administering heat treatments, which would include (a) maintaining a safe distance between the patient's treatment area and the heat lamp and/or other heat-emitting apparatus, and (b) administering the heat treatment for an appropriate duration.

TCM PRACTITIONERS BOARD 中医管理委员会
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