

## Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board

### PRESS RELEASE

#### Suspension of Registration of TCM Physician

1 **Tang Yeow Leong @ Tan Yeow Leong (邓有良)**, of Ban Lin Thong Drug Store (万宁堂药行), Blk 37 Circuit Road #01-387, Singapore 370037 (latest place of practice), a registered TCM physician, was found guilty of the following complaint:

Tang Yeow Leong @ Tan Yeow Leong (“**Tang**”) was found to have prescribed and/or dispensed 4 unlabelled blue tablets to a patient. The Health Sciences Authority tested the unlabelled blue tablets prescribed and/or dispensed by Tang and found them to contain Paracetamol, a western medicine. Tang’s conduct of prescribing and/or dispensing 4 tablets containing Paracetamol was in breach of Clause 4.1.3 of the “Ethical Codes and Ethical Guidelines for TCM Practitioners” (the “**Ethical Code**”) and the Board’s Notice 2005/2 dated 20 May 2005 (the “**Notice**”). In this regard, Tang has been found to have breached Section 19(1)(f) and 19(1)(i) of the Traditional Chinese Medicines Practitioners Act.

2 Notwithstanding that the quantity of tablets prescribed and/or dispensed was small and the patient did not suffer any harm, the TCM Practitioners Board (the “**Board**”) noted that Tang had acted in disregard of the Notice in prescribing and/or dispensing western medicine to a patient. As the infringement involves prescribing and dispensing of medicines to patients, the Board takes a very serious view of the breach and takes the position that suspension of registration is warranted.

3 In this regard, the Board imposed the following sanctions against Tang pursuant to Section 19(2) of the Act:

- a) To suspend Tang’s registration as a TCM physician for a period of 3 months
- b) To censure Tang;
- c) To impose a penalty of \$ 5,000; and
- d) To pay costs and expense of and incidental to the inquiry before the Investigation Committee pursuant to Section 20 of the Act.

In addition, the Board also required Tang to provide a written undertaking to the Board that he would not prescribe dispense and/or give any form of western medicine to his patients in the future.

4 Tang was dissatisfied with the Board’s decision as he maintains that he should not be suspended at all and that the fine imposed should only be S\$2,000. He filed an appeal to the High Court against the Board’s decision. The appeal came on for hearing before Justice Lai Siu Chiu on 5 October 2012. Justice Lai agreed with the Board’s counsel’s submission that the infringement by Tang should not be treated lightly by the Board and she agreed that a suspension of Tang’s registration is warranted as the Board had previously notified all TCM practitioners that they are strictly prohibited from prescribing and dispensing any western medicine whether on its own or mixed with Chinese medicine. She however made a slight adjustment to the suspension and fine imposed by reducing the suspension period from three months to two months and the fine from S\$5,000 to S\$4,000. While the Justice did say that the initial punishment of three months’ suspension seemed “a little harsh” and

made slight adjustment to the period of suspension, the Board would wish to clarify that there is no past similar precedent case as this is the first case of a TCM physician who had prescribed and dispensed 4 unlabelled tablets containing paracetamol to a patient who did not suffer any adverse consequence after taking two of the tablets. All past cases involving prescription of western medicine involved patients who had suffered adverse consequences and were given suspension periods of one year or more together with fines. All such cases were considered by the Board when they made the initial punishment of three months. The Board noted the learned Justice's agreement with the Board that in Tang's case, a suspension is warranted.

5. Following the court's decision, the following sanctions are imposed on Tang:-
- (a) To suspend Tang's registration for a period of two months;
  - (b) To censure Tang;
  - (c) To impose a penalty of S\$4,000;
  - (d) To pay costs and expenses of and incidental to the inquiry before the Investigation Committee pursuant to Section 20 of the Act.

Tang is to provide a written undertaking to the Board that he would not prescribe dispense and/or give any form of western medicine to his patients in the future.