



TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS BOARD

81 Kim Keat Road, #09-00, Singapore 328836

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Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board PRESS RELEASE

Suspension and Censure of TCM Physician

Madam Yong Rong Mei (杨榕镁) is a registered Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Practitioner with the TCM Practitioners Board. At all material times, she was practising at Nanyang TCM Clinic, located at 1 Jalan Anak Bukit, #02-21, Bukit Timah Plaza, Singapore 588996.

2 A complaint with statutory declaration was filed against Yong Rong Mei (“**Madam Yong**”) on 21 March 2018. The Complainant alleged that Madam Yong had failed to exercise reasonable care and precautions while administering TCM cupping treatment, causing burn injuries on the Complainant’s left calf.

3 The Complainant consulted Madam Yong on 3 October 2017 for a sprained left ankle. After examining the ankle, Madam Yong proceeded to perform TCM fire cupping treatment¹ along the Complainant’s left calf and ankle area. The cupping procedure was repeated three times during the treatment, with the last episode resulting in an intense sharp pain on the Complainant’s calf.

4 When the cup was removed, the Complainant’s ankle area was found to be red and blistering (“**burn Injury**”). To treat the blisters, Madam Yong applied some Chinese medicated oil on the affected area. She also told the Complainant that minor rashes and blisters were common occurrence in TCM fire cupping treatments. When the pain continued to linger, the Complainant sought further medical treatment at the A&E department on the same day, where she was diagnosed with second degree burns.

5 After reviewing the Written Explanations furnished by Madam Yong, an Inquiry Committee was convened by the Board to investigate into the Complaint. On the conclusion of hearing, the Inquiry Committee made the following findings:

¹ TCM treatment modality in which a partial vacuum created through heating the air in a glass or bamboo cup, is placed over the target area to achieve therapeutic effect.

- (a) Madam Yong had adequately informed the complainant of the benefits and risks (minor burns and blisters) of TCM fire cupping treatment before the signing of the consent form to receive treatment.
- (b) The Inquiry Committee after reviewing the evidence found that Madam Yong had caused the Complainant to sustain burn injuries by failing to provide appropriate care and exercise safeguards, to prevent the risk of burn injuries to the complainant. As a result, the Inquiry Committee found Madam Yong guilty of professional negligence and this amounts to a breach of Clause 4.1.1 (e) of the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines for TCM practitioners.
- (c) Madam Yong was found to have acted in breach of paragraph 4.1.1(e) of the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines for TCM Practitioners and read in conjunction with Section 19(1)(f) and (i) of the TCM Practitioners Act (Cap 333A).

6 In determining the sanctions to be imposed on Madam Yong, the Board took into consideration the severity of the burn injuries, the conduct of Madam Yong at the material time when she administered the TCM fire cupping treatment and the mitigating circumstances.

7 Madam Yong was not mindful that heating up the same glass cup with fire after each cupping movement had caused the cup to be overheated. Consequently, the cumulative heat inside the cup and on the rim of the cup caused burn injuries to her patient. Madam Yong also failed to carefully monitor the Complainant's skin colour and condition after each cupping movement before administering further cupping. She did not take adequate precautions to avert serious burn injuries to her patient.

8 The Board also considered the mitigating factor that Madam Yong had demonstrated good intentions in caring for the Complainant after the burn incident. She procured additional burn medications from the pharmacy for the Complainant. The Board also noted that she did not collect any payment from the latter for her TCM treatment.

9 Taking into considerations the Inquiry Committee's findings and the mitigation by Madam Yong, the Board decided to impose the following sanctions against Madam Yong, pursuant to Section 19(2) of the TCM Practitioners Act:



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(a) A suspension of Madam Yong's TCM registration for a period of six (6) months; and

(b) Censure

10 Pursuant to Section 20(1) of the Act, Madam Yong is ordered to pay for the costs and expenses of and incidental to the inquiry conducted and action taken against her.

11 Patient safety is of paramount importance in all TCM treatments and the Board would like to urge all registered TCM practitioners to participate in Continual Professional Education (CPE) and to exercise due care and precautions in administering TCM heat therapies so as to prevent burns to patients. The Board is deeply concerned with repeated occurrences of burn injury cases due to professional negligence. Over the last 5 years (from 2016 to 2020), there were 5 reported cases of burn injury caused to patients and these were attributed mainly to TCM acupuncture treatment involving TCM cupping and moxibustion. A lack of awareness of the required professional standards is not an excuse and a departure from the standard of care reasonably expected of a TCM practitioner. Disciplinary actions will be taken against errant TCM practitioners for professional misconduct and negligence to protect the interests of all patients. The Board has also rolled out mandatory continuing TCM education last year for all registered TCM practitioners to raise the standard and safety of TCM practice in Singapore.

TCM PRACTITIONERS BOARD 中医管理委员会
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