



SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

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PRESS RELEASE

DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY FOR DR CHAI CHWAN

1. The Disciplinary Committee ("DC") of the Singapore Medical Council ("SMC") held a disciplinary inquiry against Dr Chai Chwan ("Dr Chai") on 4 and 5 March 2010.
2. At the material time, Dr Chai was a general practitioner practising at Little Cross Family Clinic, located at Block 915, Tampines St 91, #01-41, Singapore 520915.
3. The proceedings arose from 2 complaints (received in 2003 and 2004 respectively) against Dr Chai which essentially related to Dr Chai's prescription of Subutex and his management of patients who were prescribed with Subutex. These 2 complaints were also previously the subject of Dr Chai Chwan's application to the High Court for leave to commence judicial review proceedings. Dr Chai's application was denied and the High Court's written judgement was then released in May 2009.
4. The 2 complaints were heard together in a joint inquiry as the nature of the charges was substantially similar. Dr Chai pleaded guilty to 122 charges set out as follows:
 - (a) 115 charges in respect of the 1st Complaint; and
 - (b) 7 charges in respect of the 2nd Complaint.
5. These charges were similar in that they alleged that Dr Chai:
 - (a) Inappropriately prescribed Subutex to a number of patients;
 - (b) Did not formulate and/or adhere to any management plan for the treatment of the patients' medical condition by the prescription of Subutex; and

- (c) Did not record or document in the patients' Patient Medical Records details or sufficient details of the patients' diagnosis, symptoms and/or condition and/or any management plan such as to enable him to properly assess the medical condition of the patients over the period of treatment.
6. The DC convicted Dr Chai on all the Charges that he pleaded guilty to.
 7. The DC was disappointed that Dr Chai failed to demonstrate that he had a proper management plan in treating his large number of patients.
 8. The DC noted that there were scant details in the clinical records with respect to clinical history, physical examination and management plan of the patients. There were no follow-up progress reports on the patients for their treatment. The DC was of the opinion that the general standard of clinical notes was far below what was expected.
 9. However, the following mitigating factors were taken into consideration:
 - (a) Dr Chai had pleaded guilty to the 122 charges;
 - (b) The charges related to periods **prior to** the Ministry of Health introducing the Clinical Practice Guidelines on "Treatment of Opiate Dependence" in November 2005;
 - (c) The numerous courses and training Dr Chai had undergone and received in his quest to gain more knowledge about drug abuse, addiction, treatment, supervision and counselling of drug addicts throughout the years of his practice, demonstrating his interest in this;
 - (d) Dr Chai had also notified the Central Narcotics Bureau and the Ministry of Health that he was treating drug addicts; and
 - (e) Good character references from fellow doctors and testimonials from grateful former drug addicts whom he had treated.
 10. While Dr Chai had mitigating factors in his favour, the DC emphasised that it was important to have a high standard of professionalism in his practice. It was a doctor's duty to comply with the rules and practice as drawn out by the profession to ensure that standards were not compromised.
 11. Taking all factors into consideration, the DC ordered that Dr Chai:

(a) be fined the sum of \$7,000;

(b) be censured;

(c) gives a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not engage in the conduct complained of or any similar conduct; and

(d) pays the costs and expenses of and incidental to these proceedings, including the costs of the solicitors to the SMC and the Legal Assessor.

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