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PRESS RELEASE

DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY FOR DR WONG YOKE MENG

1. The Disciplinary Committee (“DC”) of the Singapore Medical Council (“SMC”) held a disciplinary inquiry in September 2010 for Dr Wong Yoke Meng (“Dr Wong”), a registered medical practitioner specialising as an obstetrician and gynaecologist. Dr Wong, age 63 years, was practising at Clinique Suisse, located at 290 Orchard #08-01/02 Paragon Medical Centre, Singapore 238859 at the material time of the complaint.
2. Dr Wong faced one charge of professional misconduct for offering, by way of an advertisement titled “Anti-Aging & Aesthetic Medicine” found on a poster panel displayed in Clinique Suisse (the “Advertisement”), stem cell for skin therapy and/or facial and body rejuvenation, a treatment that was not medically proven. This was in breach of the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (ECEG). Dr Wong contested the charge against him.
3. The DC noted that current research on stem cells for treatment of skin conditions was mainly directed at the treatment of burns, scars and for wound healing. There was no published evidence in peer-reviewed scientific or medical journals on the usefulness of stem cells for skin regeneration “to generate new skin cells for a fresher, younger look” as claimed by the Advertisement. As such, the treatments offered in the Advertisement were not medically accepted and not evidence-based.
4. Dr Wong claimed that the offered services described as “stem cell for skin therapy” were merely the topical application of stem cell creams. As such, he was not providing any medical treatment but was merely selling cosmetics to patients.
5. The Advertisement offered “escorted tours” to overseas locations for stem cell for skin therapy and/or facial and body rejuvenation. Dr Wong stated that this meant that his clinic would arrange for patients to be escorted to other countries where the foreign

parties provided such services and he did not get paid for services performed overseas. However, Dr Wong conceded that he did have indirect benefit from referring patients for such facial and body rejuvenation treatment as he conducted the pre- and post-treatment follow-up and would attend to any side effects that patients might have after such treatment. Dr Wong said that he would explain the risks involved in such stem cell treatment, and would advise patients on what to expect. His patients would only go for the overseas treatment on his advice. He said that he had no idea that stem cell therapy was not legal in Singapore and believed that he was not doing any harm.

6. The DC was satisfied that the medical services offered by Dr Wong, namely stem cell skin therapy and stem cell therapy for facial and body rejuvenation, were not medically proven. As such, the evidentiary burden lay on Dr Wong to prove that the treatment was done in context of an approved clinical trial, which Dr Wong had not done.
7. The DC did not accept Dr Wong's position that he was not guilty of any misconduct because he was merely providing topical creams for skin and that such products were merely cosmetics. The DC noted that in the Advertisement, Dr Wong held himself out to his patients that he was providing "Aesthetic Medicine" and "Stem Cell Therapy" and that such words would have led members of the public to believe that he/she would be receiving medical treatment from Dr Wong, and that such treatment would be medically proven and accepted. The public's trust in the medical profession would therefore be violated if a doctor sold cosmetic products instead of providing a medically proven treatment. On this point, the DC also noted that there was nothing in Dr Wong's advertisement, website or in the documents made available by Dr Wong to his patients, that would have indicated to patients that the treatment was in the nature of cosmetics only. A patient has a reasonable expectation that when he sees a doctor for aesthetic reasons, he will be offered a form of medical treatment and/or medical management plan that is medically proven.
8. Accordingly, the DC convicted Dr Wong of the charge of professional misconduct for the reasons below. With regard to the facial and body rejuvenation treatment, the fact that the stem cell treatment was carried out overseas did not absolve Dr Wong from misconduct. Dr Wong knew or ought to have known that the services offered by the entities overseas were not medically proven. The DC noted that the ECEG embodied the standards of the medical profession in respect of untested practices and clinical trials. The gravamen of the charge was one of offering to carry out a treatment that was not medically proven. It was irrelevant where the objectionable treatment was carried out as doctors should not be offering any medical treatment to any patient that was not

medically proven. In fact, the DC noted that patients would have looked to Dr Wong as the primary doctor as he was providing them a holistic program for facial and body rejuvenation by offering them advice as to their suitability for the stem cell treatment (which would have led his patients to reasonably expect Dr Wong to endorse such treatment) and by offering to follow up with them after they received the stem cell treatment overseas.

9. In determining sentence, the DC considered the fact that there was no evidence of any actual harm suffered by any of Dr Wong's patients. The DC ordered that Dr Wong be fined \$10,000 and censured. The DC also ordered that Dr Wong give a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not offer or continue to offer to patients, management plans or remedies that are not generally accepted by the medical profession, except in the context of a formal and approved clinical trial. Dr Wong was also ordered to pay the costs and expenses of and incidental to these proceedings.

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