



SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

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PRESS RELEASE

DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY FOR DR WONG CHOO WAI

1. The Disciplinary Committee ("DC") of the Singapore Medical Council ("SMC") held a disciplinary inquiry for Dr Wong Choo Wai ("Dr Wong") of Bedok Day & Night Clinic located at Block 418 Bedok North Avenue 2 #01-87 Singapore 460418, on 22 to 25 November 2010 and 2 June 2011. The proceedings arose out of a complaint to the SMC dated 30 January 2008 by the Ministry of Health.

2. Dr Wong faced 27 charges of professional misconduct under Section 45(1)(d) of the Medical Registration Act, for failing to exercise due care in the management of his patients. The charges relate to:
 - (a) inappropriately prescribing codeine containing medication (i.e. Dhasedyl) and/or benzodiazepines;
 - (b) failing to record or document details or sufficient details of the patients' diagnosis, symptoms, condition, advice given and/or management plan in the respective patients' Patient Medical Records, such as to enable proper assessment of the medical condition of the patients over the periods of treatment; and
 - (c) failing to refer the patients to medical specialists for further management of the patients' need for codeine containing medication and/or benzodiazepines and for blood or chest x-ray investigations in respect of the patients' need for codeine containing medication.

3. Dr Wong pleaded guilty to 4 out of 27 of these charges, and contested the remaining 23 charges. The DC convicted Dr Wong on all the 27 charges, and came to the following conclusions:
 - (a) Dr Wong did not evaluate his patients adequately or go into the history of the patients with sufficient detail before prescribing benzodiazepines to them, and there was no close monitoring of the dosages prescribed to patients;
 - (b) Dr Wong ought to have treated the underlying cause of his patients' coughing symptoms and not simply provide relief for the symptoms by prescribing codeine medication. Further, Dr Wong's long term prescription of codeine medication put the patients at risk of addiction;
 - (c) Dr Wong's standard of history taking fell short of what was required by the SMC Ethical Code and Guidelines. There was a dearth of the details of each consultation. Dr Wong was unable to recollect details of the consultations even with the aid of his own records. Further, Dr Wong did not document a treatment plan for treating the underlying causes of patients' need for hypnotic/cough medication, apart from the long-term prescription of such medication, which the DC did not accept to be a good clinical practice. The DC held that it is sufficient for misconduct to be proven so long as the doctor's practice posed potential harm to befall the patients. Dr Wong's failure to maintain proper records amounted to misconduct;
 - (d) Save in respect of two charges, Dr Wong ought to have but had failed to refer the patients for further investigations by medical specialists. A doctor ought to refer patients to another doctor with the necessary expertise when the objective facts show that he is no longer capable of treating the patients or when his treatment has failed.
4. Taking the evidence and mitigating factors into consideration, the DC suspended Dr Wong from practice for a period of **6 months**. The DC also ordered a fine of **S\$5,000.00** to be imposed on Dr Wong. In addition, the DC ordered Dr Wong be censured and to give a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not engage in the conduct complained of or any similar conduct. Dr Wong was also ordered to pay the costs and expenses of and incidental to the inquiry

proceedings, including the costs of the counsel to the SMC and the Legal Assessor.

5. The DC ordered that the Grounds of Decision be published.
6. Dr Wong's 6-month suspension took effect on 2 July 2011.

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