



## **SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL**

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17 June 2013

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE INQUIRY FOR DR TANG YEN HO ANDREW**

1. A Disciplinary Committee (“DC”) Inquiry (“Inquiry”) was held for Dr Tang Yen Ho Andrew (“Dr Tang”), age 53 years, of Tang Medical & Surgery Pte Ltd, Block 8, Jalan Batu, #01-11, Singapore 431008. The Inquiry was held on 7 to 9 May 2013.
2. Dr Tang faced 17 charges of professional misconduct for failing to exercise due care in the management of 17 patients with hypnotic medication (benzodiazepines) and codeine-containing cough mixtures. The substance of the charges against Dr Tang is that he failed to exercise due care in the management of his patients by inappropriately prescribing hypnotic medication in contravention of the Ministry of Health’s Clinical Practice Guidelines for Prescribing Benzodiazepines (August 2002 and/or September 2008). He was also charged for having failed to formulate or adhere to a management plan for the treatment of his patients including a plan to reduce or taper his patients’ intake of the hypnotic medication. He was also charged for having failed to maintain sufficiently detailed records of his patients’ diagnosis, conditions and treatment plans.
3. Dr Tang faced a further 17 charges of professional misconduct for failing to maintain clear, accurate, legible and sufficient clinical details in the patient medical records of the subject patients. The substance of the charges against Dr Tang is that he had acted in breach of Article 4.1.2 (Medical Records) of the Singapore Medical Council Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines because he did not maintain adequate documentation in the patient medical records such as to (i) enable him to properly assess the medical condition of the patients over the period of treatment and/or (ii) to enable another doctor reading the medical records to take over the management of the case.
4. Dr Tang claimed trial to contest all 34 charges. Upon hearing the oral evidence and reviewing the documentary evidence submitted by both the Prosecution and the

Defence, the Disciplinary Committee (“DC”) found Dr Tang guilty of all 34 charges and convicted him of the same. The DC found that Dr Tang had failed to:

- (a) adequately assess his patients’ conditions;
- (b) arrange appropriate and timely investigations, such as X-rays or blood investigations for his patients;
- (c) formulate management plans such as:
  - (i) refer his patients to appropriate specialists;
  - (ii) prescribe, dispense or supply medicines on clear medical grounds and in reasonable quantities as appropriate to his patients’ needs;
  - (iii) inform his patients about the prescribed medicines or their side effects.
  - (iv) advise on alternative treatments/options; and
  - (v) attempts to taper off patients’ medicines; and
- (d) keep clear, accurate, legible and sufficient records of his attendances, advice and management of his patients’ illnesses.

5. The DC was of the view that Dr Tang’s conduct with regard to his prescription practice and patient management indicates a pattern of intentional, deliberate departure from the standards observed or approved by members of the medical profession of good repute and competency, particularly considering that he had been a registered medical practitioner since 1985.

6. Dr Tang had submitted in mitigation that:

- (a) The amount of codeine in the Dhasedyl he had prescribed was not excessive;
- (b) Prolonged use of high doses of codeine has produced tolerance and physical dependence of the morphine type in a very small proportion of users. Dr Tang’s prescription of codeine-containing cough mixtures was within the limit of the maximum recommended dose of codeine tablets (360 mg);
- (c) His treatment enabled his patients to remain well and be useful and functional members of society. It also prevented them from seeking illicit drugs and alcohol for their symptoms; and
- (d) The two Guidelines were merely guidelines and treatment had to be tailored to the different requirements of his patients.

7. He is a first time offender with many years of practice. He has been practising in this manner with a view to helping his patients function as normal and useful members of society.

8. In the circumstances, taking into consideration the evidence and points raised by Dr Tang in his plea in mitigation, the DC ordered that Dr Tang:
  - (a) Be suspended for a period of **6 months**;
  - (b) A fine of **\$10,000** shall be imposed;
  - (c) Be censured;
  - (d) Provide a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not engage in the conduct complained of, or of any similar conduct; and
  - (e) Pay the costs and expenses of and incidental to the proceedings, including the costs of the counsel to the SMC and the Legal Assessor.
  
9. The DC ordered that the Grounds of Decision be published.
  
10. Dr Tang's 6-month suspension took effect on 9 June 2013.

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