



## SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY FOR DR WONG CHEOK WAY

1. A Disciplinary Committee (“DC”) Inquiry (“Inquiry”) was held for Dr Wong Cheok Way (“Dr Wong”), age 47 years. The Inquiry concluded in April 2013.
2. The Inquiry proceedings arose out of a complaint by the Ministry of Health (“MOH”) dated 20 October 2010 relating to Dr Wong’s practice at We Care Clinic & Surgery, Block 442 Pasir Ris Drive 6, #01-26, Singapore 510442.
3. Dr Wong initially faced 20 charges of professional misconduct for failing to exercise due care in the management of his patients with hypnotic medication (benzodiazepines).
4. The substance of the charges against Dr Wong 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 (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, and for having failed to maintain sufficiently detailed records of his patients’ diagnosis, conditions and treatment plans.
5. Pursuant to representations by Dr Wong, the Prosecution proceeded on 8 charges and did not proceed on the remaining 12 charges. Dr Wong pleaded guilty to the 8 charges proceeded on and admitted to the Agreed Statement of Facts submitted by the Prosecution.
6. The DC accepted Dr Wong’s plea of guilt and accordingly found him guilty of the said 8 charges.
7. Dr Wong had submitted in mitigation that:

- a) There is no evidence of actual harm to patients;
  - b) There is no financial exploitation of patients;
  - c) 7 out of the 8 charges relating to prescription of Dormicum were all volunteered by Dr Wong;
  - d) Dr Wong co-operated with authorities;
  - e) He is genuinely remorseful and has taken remedial action;
  - f) This is his first offence, and he is not a pill dispenser who indiscriminately prescribed benzodiazepines; and
  - g) He is cognizant that hypnotics can be abused, and advised patients on alternative non-pharmaceutical methods of treatment. He has also advised patients to reduce hypnotic medication.
8. The DC had considered all the points raised in the plea in mitigation and had concluded that Dr Wong had acted in disregard of his professional duties. The improper prescription of hypnotic medication and failure to maintain proper medical records in accordance with the said Guidelines is inappropriate and unprofessional.
9. Nonetheless, the DC accepted that there are mitigating factors in the form of the testimonials from his patients and professional colleagues.
10. The DC noted that Dr Wong had pleaded guilty to the said 8 charges although he did not do so at the earliest instance. While the DC had noted that 7 out of the 8 cases involving the prescription of Dormicum were volunteered by Dr Wong to the Ministry officer during the clinical audit, inappropriate prescription of hypnotic medication is misconduct for which the DC believes a period of suspension is called for.
11. The DC had considered the three sentencing precedents submitted by Dr Wong's solicitors and was of the view that there were facts in those cases which can be distinguished from Dr Wong's case.
12. In the circumstances, taking the evidence and mitigating factors into consideration, the DC ordered that Dr Wong:
- a. Be suspended from practice for a period of **3 months**;
  - b. Be fined a sum of **\$3,000**;
  - 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.

13. The DC also ordered that the Grounds of Decision be published.
14. Dr Wong's 3-month suspension will take effect on 1 August 2013.

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