



## SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

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### **PRESS RELEASE DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL INQUIRY FOR DR HO THONG CHEW**

1. The Disciplinary Tribunal (“**DT**”) of the Singapore Medical Council (“**SMC**”) held a disciplinary inquiry on 18 December 2014 for Dr Ho Thong Chew (“Dr Ho”). Dr Ho, aged 44 years, was a registered general practitioner practising at Focus Medical Group located at Blk 226C Ang Mo Kio Ave 1 #01-649, Singapore 563226 at the material time.
2. Dr Ho faced 12 charges under Section 53(1)(b) of the Medical Registration Act (Cap. 174), for having been convicted in Singapore of an offence implying a defect in character which makes him unfit for his profession. The charges were in respect of his criminal conviction in 2012 at the Subordinate Courts of the Republic of Singapore (as it then was), where he pleaded guilty to and was convicted of 12 charges of selling Dhasedyl Syrup which contained Codeine, being a medicinal product not on the General Sales List under the Medicines Act (Cap. 176), by way of wholesale dealing without a wholesale dealer’s licence.
3. Dr Ho pleaded guilty to, and was convicted of, all 12 charges by the DT.
4. The DT noted Dr Ho’s mitigation plea that as a result of the criminal conviction, he paid a heavy fine, served a jail term and was not able to earn any income for more than 2 years.
5. It was also submitted in mitigation that as a result of his criminal conviction, Dr Ho suffered a substantial loss of income because of the adverse publicity and disruption. However, the DT was of the view that this was not a weighty mitigating factor.

6. The DT did not accept the two reasons submitted by Dr Ho for his commission of the criminal offences, namely, his need to earn more money for the clinic and to support his children's medical care and future, as mitigating as needing money could not be an excuse for criminal acts.
7. Further, the DT did not give much weight to Dr Ho's claim of having been harassed by cough mixture addicts and the circumstances under which he came to deal with his accomplices to conduct wholesale dealing of the Dhasedyl Syrup, as Dr Ho could have reported the matter to the Police instead of enlisting the help of the accomplices.
8. The DT also noted the following mitigating factors:
  - (a) Dr Ho's early plea of guilt and his full cooperation rendered during the investigation as well as the commendations from his patients;
  - (b) Dr Ho's children's medical conditions; and
  - (c) Dr Ho's suffering of mental torture and depression.
9. However, the DT was of the view that the overriding interests in this case must be the protection of public interests and to uphold the integrity of the medical profession. Accordingly, the main sentencing consideration had to be one of deterrence. In this regard, the DT took into account the following aggravating factors:
  - (a) Dr Ho knew that the Dhasedyl Syrup was to be sold to the public with no control over the ultimate recipients of the Dhasedyl Syrup and the potential harm that could be caused to the public through its sale;
  - (b) Dr Ho's blatant disregard of the law by his continuing to engage in wholesale dealing of Dhasedyl Syrup even after his clinic had been "raided" by the Health Sciences Authority; and

- (c) The sale of a large quantity of Dhasedyl Syrup (i.e. approximately 1907 litres in total) containing Codeine, without proper licence for a period of 5 months to 3 persons with full knowledge that it was meant for resale for a substantial profit.
10. Having regard to all the circumstances of the case and considering the submissions and precedents cited, the DT ordered that:
- (a) Dr Ho's name be removed from the Register of Medical Practitioners; and
  - (b) Dr Ho pays the costs and expenses of and incidental to the proceedings, including the costs of the solicitors to the SMC.
11. The DT also ordered that the Grounds of Decision be published.
12. Dr Ho's name was removed from the Register of Medical Practitioners with effect from **18 January 2015**.

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