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PRESS RELEASE

DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL INQUIRY FOR DR FONG WAI YIN

1. A Disciplinary Tribunal (“DT”) held an inquiry (“the inquiry”) into a complaint against Dr Fong Wai Yin (“Dr Fong”) on 25 July 2016.
2. Dr Fong, aged 59, was practising as a general practitioner at Nanyang Centre Clinic, Block 959 Jurong West Street 92, #01-162, Singapore 640959 at the material time.
3. A complaint was made by the son of one of Dr Fong’s patients (the “Patient”) who had consulted Dr Fong on three occasions in March 2013. At the consultations, the Patient presented with red eyes and high pressure in her eyes, blurred vision, and severe and persistent headache and vomiting. Despite these presenting symptoms, Dr Fong did not carry out a physical assessment of the Patient for visual acuity nor properly assess her red eyes. He also did not adequately and comprehensively document the Patient’s history in respect of the condition of her eyes, and he did not provide a timely referral of the Patient to an ophthalmologist for immediate and urgent assessment. The Patient was subsequently diagnosed with Bilateral Acute Angle Closure Glaucoma, a serious ocular disease that requires immediate treatment.
4. The Singapore Medical Council (“SMC”) preferred three charges of professional misconduct against Dr Fong under section 53(1)(d) of the Medical Registration Act (Cap 174) in relation to his treatment and management of the Patient. The three charges faced by Dr Fong were for:

- (a) Breaching Guideline 4.1.2 of the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (“ECEG”) by failing to adequately and comprehensively document the Patient’s history in respect of the condition of her eyes;
 - (b) Breaching Guidelines 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.5 of the ECEG in that he failed to carry out a physical assessment of the Patient for visual acuity as well as the Patient’s red eyes; and
 - (c) Despite the Patient presenting with red eyes and high pressure in eyes, blurred vision and severe and persistent headache and vomiting on three visits over five days without improvement, he failed to provide a timely referral of the Patient to a specialist or hospital setting for immediate and urgent assessment.
5. At the inquiry, Dr Fong pleaded guilty to all three charges of professional misconduct.
6. In coming to its decision, the DT gave full weight to the mitigation plea of Dr Fong, in particular that he had an unblemished record and was truly remorseful and had pleaded guilty early to all three charges.
7. However, the DT took the view that Dr Fong should have checked for visual acuity at each consultation, as the Patient’s complaints suggested a more serious condition. Given that the Patient saw Dr Fong three times, her lack of improvement at each subsequent consultation should have raised some concerns on Dr Fong’s part.
8. The DT was also deeply concerned that Dr Fong failed to document in full detail the Patient’s presenting complaints. He was not specific in his case notes, and failed to carry out an assessment of the Patient’s visual acuity at each of the three consultations with her. Instead, Dr Fong was content to assure the Patient that there was no cause for alarm and his advice on all three occasions remained the same without taking further steps or referring the Patient to a specialist. As a result of this, the Patient suffered an injury or loss in her vision.

9. Another factor was the gravity of the Patient's illness and the fact that it could have potentially led to a permanent loss of vision, if it was left untreated or if there was an undue delay in treatment. The DT noted that the Patient had trusted Dr Fong with her care and management and consulted him three times before she sought a second opinion. It was purely fortuitous that the doctor providing the second opinion immediately referred her to a hospital where her condition was properly diagnosed.
10. The DT agreed with the submissions of the SMC that a period of suspension would be appropriate in this case to send a signal to medical professionals on the importance of maintaining the highest professional standards which are expected of them.
11. Having carefully considered all the facts and circumstances of the case, the DT ordered that Dr Fong:
 - (a) be suspended for a period of three months;
 - (b) be censured;
 - (c) give a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not engage in the conduct complained of or any similar conduct; and
 - (d) pay the costs and expenses of and incidental to the proceedings, including the costs of the solicitors to the SMC.
12. The DT also ordered that its Grounds of Decision be published.
13. Dr Fong's three-month suspension takes effect on 15 September 2016 and will run to 14 December 2016 (both dates inclusive).

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