



SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

16 College Road, #01-01 College of Medicine Building, Singapore 169854

E-mail Address: enquiries@smc.gov.sg

Website: <http://www.smc.gov.sg>

Fax Number: (65) 6258-2134

28 July 2017

PRESS RELEASE

DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL INQUIRY FOR DR SANJAY SRINIVASAN

1. A Disciplinary Tribunal (“**DT**”) inquiry (“**Inquiry**”) was held for Dr Sanjay Srinivasan (“**Dr Sanjay**”) from 17 to 21 October 2016 and 17 February 2017.
2. Dr Sanjay, aged 45, was a Senior Resident Physician at the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (“**KTPH**”) at the material time.
3. The proceedings arose from a complaint dated 28 January 2014 made to the Singapore Medical Council (“**SMC**”) by Dr Sanjay’s patient (“**the Patient**”), who was working as a private shuttle bus driver at the material time.
4. On 16 October 2013, during a consultation at KTPH, Dr Sanjay diagnosed the Patient with a mild cataract and posterior vitreous detachment in his right eye (“**Diagnosis**”) after conducting various clinical examinations. As part of the management plan, the Patient was asked to return in six weeks’ time for another evaluation or to return earlier if new symptoms were to occur.
5. Dr Sanjay gave the Patient the option of making spectacles and allowed him to continue his normal activities, including driving. The Patient was informed that if his vision did not improve after making the spectacles, the follow-up evaluation would seek to address it. The Patient was given one-day of medical leave for 16 October 2013 and assessed to be fit for work the next day.
6. Dr Sanjay claimed trial to two charges of serious negligence amounting to professional misconduct under section 53(1)(d) of the Medical Registration Act (Cap. 174) as follows:

- (a) That Dr Sanjay acted in breach of his duty to provide adequate clinical evaluation under guideline 4.1.1.1 of the 2002 edition of the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (“**ECEG 2002**”) when he failed to conduct an optical coherence tomography and/or further examination before reaching the Diagnosis (“**First Charge**”); and
 - (b) That Dr Sanjay acted in breach of guideline 4.1.1.5 of the ECEG 2002 in not providing the Patient with competent and appropriate care, when he arranged for the Patient to return six weeks later for his next clinical review and allowed the Patient to continue driving instead of putting him on medical leave during these six weeks (“**Second Charge**”).
7. At the conclusion of the Inquiry, the DT convicted Dr Sanjay of both charges.
 8. With regard to the **First Charge**, the DT found Dr Sanjay’s lack of documentation in the clinical notes of any differential diagnosis, or advice given to the Patient regarding the prescription of spectacles or the return to bus driving to be unsatisfactory, and noted that an unambiguous and accurate history was an essential part of clinical assessment before a diagnosis or differential diagnoses could be made.
 9. The DT did not agree with Dr Sanjay that his examination was adequate. There were indications that the Diagnosis did not satisfactorily account for all the Patient’s signs and symptoms, and the DT found that Dr Sanjay should have re-considered the causes of the Patient’s signs and symptoms, and explored alternative diagnoses and further examinations instead. The DT also observed that Dr Sanjay should have re-taken the Patient’s history when he realised that an interpreter was needed to interpret the management plan and diagnosis in Mandarin to the Patient.
 10. The DT noted that it was for the doctor to properly integrate, assimilate and assess the information obtained from the patient and through a thorough examination before arriving at a diagnosis and Dr Sanjay clearly fell below the standards expected of him.

11. As for the **Second Charge**, the DT noted that Dr Sanjay was aware that the Patient worked as a shuttle bus driver and that the Singapore Medical Association Medical Guidelines on Fitness to Drive (2nd Ed, 2011) required bus drivers with a Group 2 License to have visual acuity of at least 6/12 in each eye ("**6/12 Standard**"). As the Patient's right eye had a visual acuity of 6/24 and his ability to drive safely was thus diminished, he should not have been permitted to drive unless and until it was assured that he could attain the 6/12 Standard.

12. The DT found that Dr Sanjay did not make it mandatory for the Patient to make a pair of spectacles before he resumed driving after the expiry of his one-day medical leave on 16 October 2013. Instead, the DT noted that Dr Sanjay:
 - (a) assumed that the Patient would be able to make a pair of prescription glasses in less than half a day after his consultation on 16 October 2013;

 - (b) assumed that the Patient could meet the 6/12 Standard with spectacles based on a pinhole test instead of a manifest refraction. The DT also noted that a manifest refraction is the gold standard for testing and measuring refractive error; and

 - (c) failed to provide the Patient with any instruction on making spectacles except that he could obtain a pair at any optical shop, and assumed that the optician would know that the Patient was a bus driver who needed to attain the 6/12 Standard.

13. The DT agreed with the Counsel for SMC's submission that Dr Sanjay should have ensured that the Patient could meet the 6/12 Standard before allowing the Patient to drive. The DT also agreed that Dr Sanjay's failure to put the Patient on medical leave until he could ensure that the Patient met the 6/12 Standard amounted to serious negligence.

14. On the issue of sentencing, the DT noted that for the First Charge, it is important to send a message that the proper and careful clinical evaluation of a patient is vital for the proper standard of care rendered and should not be treated lightly.

15. As for the Second Charge, the DT noted that Dr Sanjay had endangered the Patient, the passengers and other road users when he allowed the Patient to resume driving despite knowing that the Patient did not meet the 6/12 Standard required for his occupation as a bus driver. The DT was of the unanimous view that this was simply unacceptable and given the public safety implications, the professional misconduct was sufficiently serious to warrant a suspension in order to serve as a general and specific deterrent. An order of suspension was also warranted in order to maintain the highest professional standards expected of medical professionals.
16. The DT accepted that Dr Sanjay was remorseful in that he could have communicated better with his patients and would take steps to improve himself. The DT also gave full weight to the fact that this was Dr Sanjay's first offence, and the testimonials and references of his good character and contributions to research and the community.
17. In the circumstances, the DT ordered that Dr Sanjay:
 - (a) be suspended from medical practice for a period of **three (3) months**;
 - (b) be censured;
 - (c) give a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not engage in the conduct complained of and any similar conduct; and
 - (d) pay the cost and expenses of and incidental to these proceedings, including the costs of the solicitors to the SMC.
18. The DT also ordered that its Grounds of Decision be published.
19. Dr Sanjay's three-month suspension took effect on 27 July 2017 and will run till 26 October 2017 (both dates inclusive).

- END -