



SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

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PRESS RELEASE

DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL INQUIRY FOR DR CHEW YEW MENG VICTOR

1. A Disciplinary Tribunal (“**DT**”) held an inquiry into a complaint against Dr Chew Yew Meng Victor (“**Dr Chew**”) on 15 February and 7 April 2017.
2. The proceedings arose from a complaint dated 26 September 2012 to the Singapore Medical Council (“**SMC**”) in relation to Dr Chew’s prescription of benzodiazepines to one of his patients between 3 November 2008 and 26 September 2012. At all material times, Dr Chew was practising as a General Practitioner at Canberra Medical Clinic (subsequently renamed Canberra Medical Aesthetics) located at 306A Canberra Road, #01-01, Singapore 751306.
3. Dr Chew, aged 52, pleaded guilty to three charges of professional misconduct for inappropriate prescriptions of benzodiazepines as set out below:
 - (a) Inappropriate prescriptions of benzodiazepines to the patient in breach of the guideline 4.1.3 of the 2002 edition of the SMC’s Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines;
 - (b) Failure to maintain sufficient details in the patient’s medical records; and
 - (c) Failure to refer the patient to a psychiatrist and/or appropriate specialist for management of the patient’s medical issues in a timely manner.
4. In determining the appropriate sentence for Dr Chew, the DT considered the following:-
 - (a) Inappropriate prescriptions of benzodiazepines and other hypnotics constitutes serious misconduct as improper or long-term use of benzodiazepines may lead

to tolerance as well as psychological and physical dependence by patients, and that the main sentencing consideration in such cases must be one of deterrence;

- (b) Even if a doctor is the sole breadwinner of his family and runs a one man practice at his clinic, that is not an “exceptional circumstance” justifying deviations from the sentencing norm; and
- (c) Failure to keep legible and sufficiently detailed medical records was not a minor and technical breach. Any psychiatrist and/or specialist, whom the patient was referred to, would need the records to be able to understand the patient’s medical history and prior treatment in order to take over the management of the case properly.

5. In the present case, the DT also noted the following aggravating factors:

- (a) Dr Chew’s misconduct involved inappropriate prescriptions of benzodiazepines over a long period of time and his prescriptions of an average of 1.9 tablets of Diazepam 10mg a week, over 129 weeks, which far exceeded the limits imposed by the relevant Ministry of Health Clinical Practice Guidelines;
- (b) Dr Chew continued prescribing benzodiazepines to the patient even in circumstances that gave rise to a plausible suspicion of drug dependence and/or abuse;
- (c) Dr Chew’s failure to keep legible and sufficiently detailed medical records posed a threat to the timely and effective treatment of the patient; and
- (d) Dr Chew’s failure to make any effort to contact the psychiatrist, which the patient claimed he was seeing, for verification or to discuss the management of the patient, when that would have been the most expedient and proper thing to do.

6. The DT also accepted the following mitigating factors raised by Dr Chew:

- (a) His early plea of guilt, his long good standing in the medical profession, his contributions to the underprivileged in society and the good testimonials

tendered on his behalf; and

(b) His lack of motivation for financial gain in making the inappropriate medical prescriptions.

7. In the circumstances, taking the evidence and mitigating factors into consideration, the DT ordered that Dr Chew:

(a) be suspended from medical practice for a period of **four (4) months**;

(b) pay a penalty of S\$12,000;

(c) be censured;

(d) give a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not engage in the conduct complained of and any similar conduct; and

(e) pay the costs and expenses of and incidental to these proceedings, including the costs of SMC's solicitors.

8. The DT also ordered that its Grounds of Decision be published.

9. Dr Chew's four-month suspension takes effect on 5 July 2017 and will run till 4 November 2017 (both dates inclusive).

- **END** -