



SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

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SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE INQUIRY FOR DR WONG YOKE MENG AND COURT OF 3 JUDGES' DECISION

DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY

1. The Disciplinary Committee ("DC") of the Singapore Medical Council ("SMC") held a disciplinary inquiry for Dr Wong Yoke Meng ("Dr Wong"), a registered medical practitioner specialising as an obstetrician and gynaecologist. The inquiry hearing was held last year and the verdict was given in April 2011. The proceedings arose out of a complaint to the SMC dated 14 February 2007 by the Ministry of Health. At all material times, Dr Wong practised at Clinique Suisse, located at 290 Orchard #08-01/02, Paragon Medical Centre, Singapore 238859 ("Clinique Suisse") and at Healthy Glow Men & Women's Clinic, located at 290 Orchard Road #09-09/10, Paragon Medical Centre, Singapore 238859 ("Healthy Glow Clinic").
2. Dr Wong faced 13 charges of professional misconduct under the Medical Registration Act, in respect of his treatment of 4 patients. The charges were as follows:

Patient 1

- (a) 1 charge of carrying out intra-muscle and intra-theal stem cell injections ("stem cell injections") on the patient, which was not medically proven as a treatment for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis ("ALS"), a condition which the patient was suffering from, outside the context of a formal and approved clinical trial (Charge 1);
- (b) 1 charge of failing to obtain the patient's informed consent prior to carrying out the stem cell injections (Charge 2); and
- (c) 1 charge of carrying out a procedure, i.e. the stem cell injections, outside his registered specialty of obstetrics and gynaecology (Charge 3).

Patient 2

- (a) 1 charge of carrying out Colonic Irrigation, which was not medically proven as a treatment for any condition documented in the patient's medical records (Charge 4);

- (b) 2 charges of carrying out procedures, namely, Coffee Enema and Chlorophyll Enema, which were not medically proven as a treatment for any medical condition (Charges 6 and 8); and
- (c) 3 charges of failing to obtain the patient's informed consent prior to carrying out the said procedures, i.e. Colonic irrigation, Coffee Enema and Chlorophyll Enema (Charges 5, 7 and 9).

Patient 3

- (a) 1 charge of carrying out a procedure, i.e. Coffee Enema, which was not medically proven as a treatment for any medical condition (Charge 10); and
- (b) 1 charge of failing to obtain the patient's informed consent prior to carrying out the Coffee Enema (Charge 11).

Patient 4

- (a) 1 charge of carrying out a procedure, i.e. Coffee Enema, which was not medically proven as a treatment for any medical condition (Charge 12); and
- (b) 1 charge of failing to obtain the patient's informed consent prior to carrying out the Coffee Enema (Charge 13).

- 3. Dr Wong contested all 13 charges and was convicted on all 13 charges at the conclusion of the inquiry.

Charge 1

- 4. In light of Dr Wong's admission that he had administered the stem cell injections and that stem cell treatment is not medically proven as a treatment for ALS, the DC held that Dr Wong was guilty. Further, the DC held that it is unable to accept Dr Wong's evidence that administering the stem cell injections out of compassion is an answer to the charge and as an experienced doctor he ought to know that he should not administer treatment which is not medically proven unless it is done as part of a clinic trial.

Charge 2

- 5. The DC held that informed consent can only be said to be properly obtained when the following requirements are met:
 - a. The doctor has to explain to the patient the reason for carrying out the procedure, the technique and the risks of possible complications;
 - b. The consent must be in writing and signed by the patient, the doctor and a witness; and
 - c. The consent must be obtained before the procedure / treatment commences.

6. The DC therefore found that Dr Wong's testimony that verbal consent was given to one Dr Bernd L. Pfeifer (who is a partner of the company, Bio Cellular Research Organisation Asia, which provided the rabbit stem cells) and that email correspondence between parties would show that the patient understood the procedure is wholly inadequate and insufficient in this case to constitute informed consent.

Charge 3

7. The DC did not accept Dr Wong's testimony that the training he underwent 25 years ago for lumbar punctures, which is different from an intrathecal injection of stem cells, sufficiently qualified him to administer the stem cell injections for treatment of ALS, a neurological disease. They were of the view that introducing a foreign material into a patient's intrathecal space had serious potential consequences and should only be conducted by a medical practitioner treating an appropriate clinical disease. Such a medical practitioner should also possess the necessary experience in doing such procedures regularly and be familiar with the possible consequences.

Charges 4 to 13

8. The DC found that Dr Wong did hold and carried out Colonic Irrigation, Coffee Enema and Chlorophyll Enema as medical treatments for medical conditions which the 3 patients did not have. It was unacceptable that any form of procedure or treatment not medically proven should be permitted to be carried out in a clinic under the supervision of a doctor giving the impression to the patient that the procedure carried out was an accepted form of treatment since it was performed by or under the supervision of the doctor.
9. The DC also found that verbal explanations and / or oral consent were not acceptable and held that Dr Wong was guilty of not obtaining informed consent from the 3 patients.
10. At the conclusion of the inquiry, the DC ordered, *inter alia*, that:
 - a. In respect of Charges 1 to 3 relating to Patient 1, that Dr Wong be suspended for 12 months;
 - b. In respect of Charges 4 to 13 relating to Patients 2, 3 and 4, that Dr Wong be fined \$10,000;
 - c. In respect of all 13 charges, that Dr Wong be censured, provide a written undertaking to the SMC that he will not engage in the conduct complained of or similar conduct, and pay the costs and expenses of and incidental to these proceedings, including the costs of the solicitors to the SMC and the Legal Assessor.

APPEAL BEFORE THE COURT OF 3 JUDGES

11. Dr Wong filed an appeal to the High Court in respect of the sentence imposed on Charges 1 to 3. The appeal was heard on 26 September 2011 and was dismissed by the High Court with costs. The 12-month suspension imposed by the DC on Dr Wong was upheld.

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