

# 香港醫務委員會

## The Medical Council of Hong Kong

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### **DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY** **MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE, CAP. 161**

Date of hearing: 25 June 2009

Defendant: Dr CHAN Wai Man (陳煒文醫生)

1. The charge alleged against the Defendant Dr CHAN Wai Man is that:

“That he, being a registered medical practitioner, prescribed steroid to his patient between May 2007 and July 2007 without explaining to her the nature of steroid drug, indication and possible side effects.

In relation to the facts alleged, he has been guilty of misconduct in a professional respect.”

#### Facts of the case

2. The Defendant Doctor was included in the General Register at the material time.
3. The Defendant Doctor worked in the “Dr. Lee Wai’s Clinic” (the Clinic) as an employee since about July 1999.
4. The complainant consulted the Defendant Doctor at the Clinic for right wrist pain from 12 May 2007 to 23 July 2007.
5. The Defendant Doctor prescribed and dispensed medications to the complainant to relieve her wrist pain, inflammation and swelling. One of the medications prescribed was a steroid, in the form of Prednisolone 5mg tablet at 4 tablets a day in divided doses, equivalent to a total of 20mg a day. She was prescribed this dosage on an intermittent basis for 22 days.

6. When the complainant asked about the nature of the medications at the first consultation, the Defendant Doctor told her that they were anti-inflammatory and pain relieving medications. He did not advise the complainant of the nature of Prednisolone, i.e. it was a steroid, nor did he tell her about the potential side effects and precautions to be taken.
7. When the complainant was admitted to Queen Mary Hospital, the medications were subsequently traced and one of them was Prednisolone.
8. A short synacthen test performed at Queen Mary Hospital showed that the complainant had mild adrenal insufficiency.
9. These facts were not disputed.
10. For a medication that has known potential side effects, patients should be advised of its nature, risks and benefits so that they can make an informed choice on whether to accept the medication. Steroid is such a medication, as it has been shown to have some serious side effects. There is general concern about the use of steroid, and patients should be given the proper advice before it is prescribed.
11. The complainant was found to have mild adrenal insufficiency, indicating that this was a likely side effect of Prednisolone.
12. It has been repeatedly emphasized by the Council in previous cases that it is a duty upon all registered medical practitioners who prescribe steroid to inform the patient of the nature and significant side effects of the medication.
13. We are satisfied that the conduct of the Defendant Doctor has fallen below the standard expected of a registered medical practitioner. We are satisfied that this conduct constitutes misconduct in a professional respect. We find him guilty of the charge.

## **Sentencing**

14. The Defendant Doctor has a clear record. He has admitted his mistake, shown remorse and apologized to the complainant. We give credit for his honest admission and his cooperative approach in the investigation and the inquiry.
15. The use of steroid is a matter of balancing the risk and benefit. The patient should always be given the proper advice so that an informed decision can be made. It is incumbent upon the doctor to give information about the nature of steroid and its potential side effects. It is not acceptable to say that the information will only be forthcoming when the patient asks for it.
16. The Council accepts that this case involves the failure to inform the patient of the nature and side effects of Prednisolone.
17. Having regard to the gravity of the case and the mitigation advanced, we order that the Defendant Doctor's name be removed from the General Register for 1 month. We further order that the removal order be suspended for 1 year, subject to the condition that the Defendant Doctor should receive continuing medical education related to the clinical use of steroid equivalent to 5 CME points within the suspension period. The proof of acquisition of such number of CME points must be submitted to the Council within 1 month of expiration of the suspension period.

Prof. Felice Lieh-Mak, CBE, JP  
Chairman, Medical Council