

香港醫務委員會
The Medical Council of Hong Kong

DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY
MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE, CAP. 161

Defendant: Dr CHAN Wing Kit (陳榮杰醫生) (Reg. no. M11454)

Date of hearing: 22 November 2012

1. The charge alleged against the Defendant, Dr CHAN Wing Kit, is that:-

“On or about 10 November 2009, he, being a registered medical practitioner, had disregarded his professional responsibility to his patient Madam [REDACTED] (“the Patient”) in that he inappropriately prescribed to her Tiratricol which contains thyroxine for treatment of obesity.”

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

Facts of the case

2. The Patient first consulted the Defendant on 30 October 2009 for obesity treatment. The Defendant prescribed to her medicines including Tiratricol for 1 week. After she finished taking the medicines, the Patient consulted the Defendant again on 10 November 2009. The Defendant prescribed to her further medicines including Tiratricol for 2 weeks.

3. The Patient took the medicines as instructed. Several days later she began to feel palpitations, tremors of hand and feet, dizziness and difficulty in falling asleep.

4. On 16 November 2009, the Patient started to experience difficulty in breathing and swelling in the neck area. She consulted another doctor and was told to stop taking Tiratricol immediately, as Tiratricol should not be used for weight reduction. The other doctor later diagnosed hyperthyroidism. From then on, the Patient was treated regularly with anti-thyroid medication until July 2012.

Findings of the Council

5. Tiratricol is a thyroid hormone. It should only be used for treatment of thyroid diseases. It must not be used to treat obesity because of the serious effects which can be life-threatening. There are clear warnings in medical literatures and health alerts issued by various authorities.
6. In 1999, the Food and Drug Administration of the United States issued a public warning against consuming Tiratricol which may cause serious health consequences including heart attacks and strokes. FDA identified Tiratricol as a Class 1 Health Hazard, indicating a potentially life-threatening risk.
7. In 2006, the Department of Health issued a warning urging the public not to use Qualicana which is a drug containing Tiratricol for weight reduction. The warning made clear that the drug was registered only for treatment of thyroid diseases.
8. All doctors have a duty to ascertain the nature and effect of a medicine before prescribing it to patients. Since 1999, a doctor should be aware of the serious risks of Tiratricol. After the 2006 warning by the Department of Health, doctors should be aware that Tiratricol should not be used for weight reduction and was registered only for treatment of thyroid diseases.
9. Before prescribing thyroxine to a patient, a doctor must first establish the baseline thyroid function for proper pre-treatment evaluation and subsequent monitoring.
10. The Defendant prescribed Tiratricol to the Patient for obesity management, which is clearly inappropriate and contraindicated. Furthermore, he inappropriately prescribed the thyroxine without conducting any test to establish the baseline of the Patient's thyroid function. Each of these acts is conduct falling short of the standard expected amongst registered medical practitioners.
11. We are satisfied that the Defendant's conduct in prescribing Tiratricol to the Patient for obesity treatment constitutes professional misconduct. We find him guilty as charged.

Sentencing

12. The Defendant has a clear record.
13. We shall give him credit in sentencing for honest admission of his mistake, both during preliminary investigation and in this inquiry.
14. We accept that the patient had a background of hyperthyroidism.
15. The Defendant has been actively taking continuing medical education in the past 10 years. He has taken remedial action to improve his medical knowledge in medical toxicology. All these reflect his insight and remorse. We are of the view that he has learnt a hard lesson, and the likelihood of re-offending is low.
16. Having regard to the gravity of the case and the mitigating factors, we order that a warning letter be served on the Defendant. The order shall be published in the Gazette.

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