

PRESS RELEASE
SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL
DISCIPLINARY INQUIRY AGAINST DR MARTIN HUANG HSIANG SHUI

1. The Disciplinary Committee (“DC”) of the Singapore Medical Council (“SMC”) held a disciplinary inquiry on 25 and 26 August 2009 against Dr Martin Huang Hsiang Shui (“Dr Huang”), a registered medical practitioner and a specialist in plastic surgery.
2. Dr Huang practised at The Cosmetic Surgery Clinic, located at 290 Orchard #20-01 Paragon Singapore 238859.
3. Dr Huang was charged with professional misconduct for offering to and performing on his patients, cell therapy involving the injection of xenogenic (animal) foetal cells into humans (“Cell Therapy”) for anti-ageing and rejuvenation purposes, a procedure that was not generally accepted by the medical profession, outside the context of a formal and approved clinical trial. Dr Huang pleaded guilty to the charge.
4. The DC found that the Cell Therapy offered and performed by Dr Huang was not a generally accepted method of treatment and was of the view that the only situation where Cell Therapy could be offered and performed was in the context of a formal and approved clinical trial.
5. Accordingly, the DC convicted Dr Huang of the charge of professional misconduct.
6. The DC noted that patients primarily rely on the advice given to them by their doctors due to the imbalance in the level of knowledge and experience between doctor and patient. The DC pointed out that most patients who seek treatment from doctors who perform aesthetic procedures, do so out of a perceived sense that their appearances can be improved. Such patients will naturally seek out doctors who are known to be experienced in aesthetic procedures. Whilst such patients may have a cursory knowledge of the laudatory claims made in magazine and articles regarding aesthetic procedures, they are unlikely to have the necessary knowledge or experience to make determinations on the appropriateness of medical procedures. It is

therefore important that patients can trust and rely on the advice of their doctors.

7. The DC referred to the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (“Ethical Code”) which provide, inter alia, that “A doctor shall not offer to patients, management plans or remedies that are not generally accepted by the profession, except in the context of a formal and approved clinical trial.” The DC stated that strict adherence to the Ethical Code is necessary to uphold the trust that the public reposes in doctors. Each time a doctor fails to abide by the provisions of the Ethical Code, this trust is eroded. The profession, as a self-regulating body, then has to take the necessary steps to ensure that this trust is restored.
8. The DC emphasised that doctors must be subject to exacting standards that the profession has set for itself. A doctor is not at liberty to perform a particular procedure without ensuring that the general body of doctors approve. The basis for requiring such exacting standards from doctors is to protect the public from harm that may be caused by methods of treatment that are not evidence-based or not generally accepted by the medical profession. Such standards are also necessary for the medical profession to maintain the trust and confidence of society. The public is entitled to believe that doctors will guarantee professional competence and integrity to society.
9. The DC commented that current knowledge is inadequate in determining the desired action of human or autologous cells injected into human beings for anti-ageing and rejuvenation, and it is even more doubtful when xenogenic cells are used for this purpose. Any such experimental procedure ought to be rigorously reviewed by the Institutional Review Board before it can be performed. The DC noted that Dr Huang was aware from the outset that Cell Therapy was not a generally accepted method of treatment, and as a senior doctor, must have been aware of the requirement to obtain the approval of the Institutional Review Board to conduct a clinical trial.
10. The DC noted that Dr Huang, in his mitigation, had stated that he had gone through 6 months of research self-experimentation. However, the DC felt that whilst he may be at liberty to try the procedure on himself, he was not entitled to inflict an unaccepted treatment on members of the public.

11. Taking all the circumstances into consideration, including Dr Huang's mitigation plea, the DC ordered that Dr Huang be fined \$5,000 and censured. The DC also ordered that Dr Huang give a written undertaking to the SMC that he will abstain from the conduct complained of or any similar conduct.
12. Dr Huang was ordered to pay the costs and expenses of and incidental to these proceedings, including the costs of the solicitor to the Singapore Medical Council and the Legal Assessor.

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