

MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE (Chapter 161)

ORDER MADE BY THE INQUIRY PANEL OF
THE MEDICAL COUNCIL OF HONG KONG

DR NG YIU PING (REGISTRATION NO.: M15120)

It is hereby notified that after due inquiry held on 14 December 2021 in accordance with section 21 of the Medical Registration Ordinance, Chapter 161 of the Laws of Hong Kong, the Inquiry Panel of the Medical Council of Hong Kong found Dr NG Yiu Ping (Registration No.: M15120) guilty of the following charges:—

'That in October 2018, she, being a registered medical practitioner, disregarded her professional responsibility to her patient ('the Patient'), in that she,

(a) failed to properly explain the potential impact of urinary tract infection on pregnancy to the Patient; and

(b) failed to arrange a follow-up consultation after arranging a urine culture test for the Patient and/or timely inform the test result to the Patient.

In relation to the facts alleged, either singularly or cumulatively, she has been guilty of misconduct in a professional respect.'

Dr NG's name has been included in the General Register from 2 July 2006 to the present. Her name has been included in the Specialist Register under the specialty of Respiratory Medicine since 2 May 2013.

Briefly stated, the Patient consulted Dr NG at the Outpatient Department of St. Paul's Hospital ('SPH') in the evening of 24 October 2018. There was no dispute that the Patient was pregnant at the material time.

According to the medical records obtained from SPH, the Patient presented with symptoms of increase in frequency of urine or dysuria and mild abdominal pain. The vital signs were normal, the abdomen was soft and there was no fever. Dr NG made a diagnosis of urinary tract infection ('UTI'). However, the Patient was reluctant to take antibiotics because of her pregnancy and requested Dr NG to arrange for urine culture test first. Dr NG then ordered 'MSU' (mid-stream urine) culture test for the Patient.

However, no arrangement was made by Dr NG for the Patient to be followed-up for review of the MSU culture test result. Nor did Dr NG explain to the Patient the potential impact of UTI on her pregnancy. Dr NG merely told the Patient that the MSU culture test result would be available in about 3 days' time. Dr NG also put down in the consultation summary under the column of Treatment Plan '*Advise to come back early if symptoms persist*'.

The Clinical Microbiology Report on the MSU culture test (the 'Report') was issued on 26 October 2018. The Report indicated that there was significant bacterial growth and the bacterium *E coli* was isolated. There was however no dispute that the Patient has not been informed of the availability of the Report.

Meanwhile, on 28 October 2018, the Patient was admitted through the Accident & Emergency Department to the Obstetric & Gynaecology Department of the Queen Mary Hospital ('QMH') with the tentative diagnosis of UTI complicating pregnancy. According to the medical records obtained from QMH, the Patient was upon admission at 23 weeks 3 days gestation and had a fever of 39.1°C. The results of obstetric examination on the Patient were normal but there was mild right-sided renal angle tenderness, suggesting that there was possible pyelonephritis. The Patient was rehydrated with intravenous fluid; and empirical antibiotic treatment with Augmentin was started pending bacteriological culture test result. Blood tests later confirmed that the Patient had an infection as shown by the raised total white blood cell and neutrophil counts. Her renal and liver functions were found to be normal.

Meanwhile, the Patient made a telephone enquiry with SPH on 28 October 2018 and was told that the Report had already been issued on 26 October 2018. The Patient then asked her husband to collect the Report from SPH later in the same day. The Report was reviewed by the treating doctor at QMH during the morning round on 29 October 2018. In view of the Report's comment that the bacterium *E coli* isolated in the MSU culture was resistant to Amoxicillin (Augmentin), microbiologist at QMH was consulted and upon whose advice antibiotic treatment was changed

to Ertapenem. The Patient's UTI was soon brought under control and she was finally discharged from QMH on 7 November 2018.

The Patient later lodged complaint against Dr NG with the Medical Council.

Dr NG admitted the factual particulars of the disciplinary charges against her.

It was the unchallenged evidence of the Secretary's expert witness, which the Inquiry Panel accepted, that '*[c]ollecting... MSU for culture was only the first part of the management' and Dr NG 'should have warned [the Patient] about the potential impact of UTI on her pregnancy, so that she should be advised to go to her obstetrician or visit the A&E Department in case symptoms of the adverse effects such as preterm labour occurred.'* The Inquiry Panel also agreed with the Secretary's expert witness that Dr NG could reassure the Patient that antibiotic treatment would likely to be effective and without any harmful effect on the foetus. In failing to properly explain to the Patient the potential impact of UTI on her pregnancy, Dr NG had by her conduct during the incident fallen below the standards expected of registered medical practitioners in Hong Kong. Accordingly, the Inquiry Panel found Dr NG guilty of disciplinary charge (a).

It was also the unchallenged evidence of the Secretary's expert witness, which the Inquiry Panel accepted, that '*[i]t would be pointless if no action was to be taken on the basis of the [MSU culture test] result'; and Dr NG should 'arrange for a follow-up visit for [the Patient] as soon as the result was available for treatment, or to phone up [the Patient] to reassure her if the result was negative. Yet neither arrangement was made...'* In failing to arrange for a follow-up consultation after arranging a urine culture for the Patient and/or timely inform the test results to the Patient, Dr NG had by her conduct during the incident fallen below the standards expected of registered medical practitioners in Hong Kong. Accordingly, the Inquiry Panel found Dr NG guilty of disciplinary charge (b).

Taking into consideration the nature and gravity of Dr NG's case and what the Inquiry Panel had heard and read in mitigation, the Inquiry Panel ordered that:—

- (1) in respect of disciplinary charge (a), a warning letter be issued to Dr NG;
- (2) in respect of disciplinary charge (b), Dr NG's name be removed from the General Register for a period of 1 month and that the operation of the removal order be suspended for a period of 6 months.

The order is published in the *Gazette* in accordance with section 21(5) of the Medical Registration Ordinance. The full decision of the Inquiry Panel of the Medical Council is published in the official website of the Medical Council of Hong Kong (<http://www.mchk.org.hk>).

LAU Wan-ye, Joseph *Chairman, The Medical Council of Hong Kong*