

MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE (Chapter 161)

ORDER MADE BY THE MEDICAL COUNCIL OF HONG KONG  
DR HO SIE KIU ALICE (REGISTRATION NO.: M09681)

It is hereby notified that after due inquiry held on 30 January 2018 in accordance with section 21 of the Medical Registration Ordinance, Chapter 161 of the Laws of Hong Kong, the Medical Council of Hong Kong found Dr HO Sie Kiu Alice (Registration No.: M09681) guilty of the following disciplinary offence:—

*‘That on or about 14 August 2014, she, being a registered medical practitioner, disregarded her professional responsibility to her patient Madam LEUNG Ho Ching (‘the Patient’), a 16-month old girl, in that she inappropriately prescribed Loperamil to the Patient who was less than 2 years old.*

*In relation to the facts alleged, she has been guilty of misconduct in a professional respect.’*

Dr HO was at all material times a registered medical practitioner. Her name has been included in the General Register from 26 September 1994 to present. Her name has never been included in the Specialist Register.

Briefly stated, the Patient was brought by her parents to consult Dr HO on 14 August 2014 and was diagnosed to be suffering from gastroenteritis. Dr HO prescribed, amongst other medications, LOPER (trade name of loperamide) 2.5 ml (0.5 mg), an anti-diarrheal drug, once every 6 hours but 3 times a day at most, to the Patient. The Patient was almost 16 months old at the time of the consultation, having been born on 18 April 2013.

There is no dispute that the Patient went home and took the prescribed medications including loperamide. The Patient’s diarrhoeal symptoms subsided rapidly within 2 days. However, the Patient developed constipation in the following 3 days. On 19 August 2014, the Patient was brought by her parents to consult one Dr TSE, a specialist in paediatrics. Upon physical examination, Dr TSE found the left sided colon of the Patient to be loaded and he suspected that her constipation might be related to the drug reaction from taking loperamide. Dr TSE immediately advised the Patient’s parents to stop giving loperamide to the Patient. Dr TSE also advised the Patient’s parents to increase the Patient’s fluid intake and to employ manual anal stimulation to ease the Patient’s constipation, if necessary.

The Patient’s father subsequently lodged the present complaint against Dr HO with the Medical Council.

It was the unchallenged expert evidence of Dr LI Chi Kong, the Secretary’s expert witness, that whilst loperamide, being a synthetic derivative of pethidine, could inhibit gut mobility and reduce gastrointestinal secretions but it should not be prescribed to children under the age of 2 years for treatment of diarrhoea.

The Medical Council agreed with the Secretary’s expert, Dr LI, that the mainstay of treatment for acute diarrhoea should be rehydration therapy and there had been reports of loperamide poisoning in very young children.

How babies might react to a medicine could be very different from adults. In this case, mere reduction in dosage of loperamide could not render the prescription safe for the Patient. The Medical Council also agreed with Dr LI that the benefit of stopping diarrhoea was out-balanced by the risks of loperamide to the Patient.

In the view of the Medical Council, Dr HO’s prescription of loperamide to the Patient was inappropriate and her conduct had fallen below the standards expected of registered medical practitioners in Hong Kong and therefore the Medical Council found her guilty of misconduct in a professional respect as charged.

Taking into account the whole circumstances of the case and the mitigation advanced by Dr HO through her solicitor, the Medical Council ordered that Dr HO’s name be removed from the General Register for a period of 1 month. The Council further ordered that the operation of the removal order be suspended for 12 months on condition that she shall complete during the suspension period satisfactory peer audit by a Practice Monitor to be appointed by the Medical Council.

The orders are published in the Gazette in accordance with section 21(5) of the Medical Registration Ordinance. The full decision 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*