

Inquiry of the Dental Council
Re: Dr. WONG Si-chiu

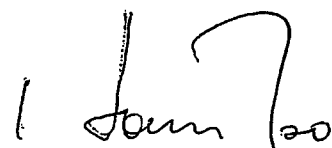
Date of hearing: 3 December 2009

1. The Defendant, Dr. Wong Si-chiu is charged as follows:

“That he, being a registered dentist, disregarded his professional responsibility to adequately treat and care for his patient [REDACTED] (“[REDACTED]”), or otherwise neglected his professional duties to [REDACTED] in that, during the period between 4 August 2007 and 9 August 2007, he failed to keep accurate and contemporaneous records (including x-rays) of the dental treatment provided to [REDACTED], and that in relation to the facts alleged he has been guilty of unprofessional conduct.”

2. The patient [REDACTED] consulted the Defendant on 4 August 2007 due to toothache in the right lower jaw. The Defendant informed the patient after x-ray examination that his lower right wisdom tooth would need to be extracted. However, the extraction process was not smooth and part of the root was fractured and left in the socket.
3. On 6 August 2007, patient felt pain from the socket and therefore went to consult the Defendant for check-up and wound cleaning. According to the patient, the Defendant told him that there was no facial swelling and so no wound cleaning was necessary, the patient left subsequently.
4. In the morning of 9 August 2007, the patient still felt pain in the socket, he sought consultation from another dental practitioner who took X-ray for him. The patient was informed that part of the root was still left in the socket. He went to see the Defendant on the same day in the afternoon for removal of the retained root fragment. He was informed by the Defendant that he would be charged for the procedure. The patient left without receiving any treatment.
5. During the PIC stage, an X-ray film was submitted by the Defendant. After investigation, this X-ray film was found not belonging to the patient. The Defendant in his subsequent submission admitted that he in fact had mixed up the X-ray film with those of other patients and up till today he still cannot retrieve those films belonging to the patient.
6. As for the clinical records, only a treatment summary was submitted which the Defendant claimed to be the contemporaneous record written soon after 9 August 2007. The Defendant claimed that he had discarded the original patient record assuming that the patient would not return for further treatment. The Defendant claimed he subsequently made a written record of what had been done on the 4th, 6th and the 9th of August 2007.

7. It is clearly stated in section 5 of the Code of Professional Discipline that dental practitioners should keep accurate and contemporaneous records of dental treatment and should keep them for a minimum of three years since the patient's last treatment. It is the responsibility of the dental practitioner to safely maintain these records against loss and to safeguard their confidentiality.
8. In this case, the Defendant admitted he had discarded the original written clinical record of the patient. He also could not submit the two X-ray films he had taken which were integral parts of the patient's record.
9. It is the ultimate responsibility of dental practitioners to have in place an effective and accountable system of record keeping in clinical practice. Proper record keeping constitutes the corner-stone of good patient care. Detailed records of treatment and disease progression enable practitioners to provide accurate follow up management for the patient.
10. We found the Defendant's behaviour in handling patient's clinical notes and radiographic records to be seriously unsatisfactory. Such irresponsible attitude failed in a practitioner's fundamental duty in patient care. The Defendant's conduct in this respect would be reasonably regarded as dishonourable and disgraceful by registered dentists of good repute and competency. We found him guilty of unprofessional conduct in respect of the charge.
11. The Defendant has a clear record. Although this case does not appertain to patient treatment, we must emphasize that record keeping is a crucial part in good practice management.
12. Having considered the gravity of the case and the mitigating factors, we decided that a warning letter should be served on Dr. Wong. The order shall not be published in the Gazette.



Dr. Homer Tso, BBS, JP
Chairman
Dental Council