

## WOMAN DIES IN PRISON



**DEAD DAUGHTER:** Ms Lian Huizuan, 27, collapsed after a drill session at Changi Women's Prison and died on March 2, 2011.

PHOTO: LIAN HE WANBAO

## CCK doctor suspended by SMC

A doctor has been suspended for a year after two disciplinary tribunal inquiries were held against him in June, the Singapore Medical Council said in a statement yesterday.

Dr Khoo Buk Kwong, 53, who had been practising at Healthplus Clinic in Choa Chu Kang, had been earlier

convicted in the Subordinate Courts of causing hurt to a police officer on duty, and for selling codeine and promethazine without a licence. He was sentenced to two weeks in jail for the first offence and fined \$60,000 for the second.

Following SMC disciplinary

proceedings, Dr Khoo was suspended for three months starting from July 12 this year for the first offence and nine months for the second offence. He was also ordered to pay the cost of the disciplinary tribunal inquiries. The suspensions, which run consecutively, will end on July 11 next year.

## Father claims they were negligent

Report by SHAFFIQ ALKHATIB  
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**The family of a woman inmate is suing two doctors and Raffles Medical Group, claiming that they are responsible for her death.**

Ms Lian Huizuan, 27, died after a drill exercise at Changi Women's Prison where she had been serving time.

Her father said she was in prison for inhalant abuse, court documents showed.

The family said that a Health Sciences Authority report dated Jan 25, 2012, stated her cause of death as consistent with cardiotoxicity, with associated use of chlorpromazine and valproic acid, in the presence of hepatitis C infection.

They added that due to the negligence of the medical team, she "sustained severe medical complications and/or toxication from which she died on March 2, 2011".

In January, her father and sister issued a writ of summons asking for \$445,482.55 in damages from the medical professionals who treated her while she was in prison.

Mr Lian Hock Kwee, 60, and Ms Lian Hui Chin, 33, named psychiatrist Tan Soo Teng, medical doctor Narulla Ranjeet Nee Chawla and Raffles Medical Group as the defendants.

In their statement of claim, Ms Lian Huizuan's family said the medical team had negligently advised and provided inadequate and/or improper medical treatment and medicines to her, and were negligent in allowing her health to deteriorate, which led to her death.

Represented by lawyer Raphael Louis, Mr Lian said in his affidavit in June that his late daughter was admitted to prison for inhalant abuse on May 6, 2010.

According to the statement of claim, she had had a history of depression and was also suffering from inhalant, codeine, heroin and benzodiazepine dependence. It also stated that the Institute of Mental Health last prescribed her with medication including epilim and chlorpromazine.

The statement said after she entered the prison, Dr Tan changed her medica-

tion to chlorpromazine, valproate and amitriptyline.

Ms Lian Huizuan consumed all the prescribed medicine from May 12, 2010, to March 2, 2011, it added.

And sometime on or around July 14, 2010, she developed symptoms including giddiness, vomiting, abdominal and leg pain, and hyperventilation.

The statement said she sought further treatment from Dr Tan and Dr Chawla, but her health problems persisted.

It added: "Despite her obvious and serious symptoms, (the doctors) did not make any reasonable attempts to monitor and find the cause of her symptoms. In fact, her health worsened over time."

Even though her health was failing, according to the statement, Dr Narulla certified her fit for drill exercise and did not conduct any review for a period of six months prior to her death.

It said: "On or about March 2, 2011, (she) was compelled to participate in a drill exercise. A short time after the drill, she collapsed and died."

In his June affidavit, Mr Lian said that Raffles Medical Group is the employer of Dr Tan and Dr Chawla.

## DRILL

He believes the prison was also negligent by asking his daughter to take part in the exercise drill and not bringing to the attention of Dr Tan and Raffles Medical Group of her deteriorating health.

The affidavit stated: "We believe that the Attorney General (representing the Singapore Prisons and/or the Director of Prisons who was in charge of the Changi Women's Prison)... must be joined as a party to the present action as the fourth defendant."

However, it added that the family members are unable to instruct their solicitors on including the prison as a party to the proceedings as they did not have all the materials and facts pointing to its negligence.

The affidavit said: "If our application to add the Attorney General is dismissed, we have instructed our solicitors to commence a fresh action against the Attorney General in respect of the allegations."

The case is still pending.

# Family SUES doctors for daughter's death

## 'She was fit'

## DR TAN SOO TENG

**Dr Tan said in his defence dated Feb 17 that when Ms Lian Huizuan, 27, was admitted to Changi Women's Prison, she had asthma, hepatitis C, colic and depression.**

He said her asthma was controlled well with inhalers and because she was hepatitis C positive, her liver was investigated at regular intervals with liver function tests.

Her colic was managed every time she complained of abdominal pains and he added that she was referred to him as a minor psychiatric case to receive regular psychiatric treatments for depression.

However, the psychiatrist said she was never at any stage a mentally disturbed person when he treated her. He stated that the medication he had ordered was medically approved.

Dr Tan also denied he had been negligent when treating her.

This included allegations he was negligent in prescribing medicine unsuitable for her as well as failing to carry out the necessary tests to detect she was suffering from side effects of his prescribed medicine.

## DR NARULLA RANJEET NEE CHAWLA

**Dr Chawla said in her defence dated Feb 17 that to the best of her knowledge, Ms Lian was fit for drill as her medical problems were well-managed.**

But she denied she was tasked to ascertain if the inmates were physically fit for drill exercises.

She added that it was also the duty of the prison officers or staff to ascertain the inmates' fitness and bring it to her notice.

Dr Chawla said there was no reason to stop Ms Lian's drill on med-

ical grounds and no recommendations were made by the prison staff, who would know the condition of each inmate.

The doctor said she "would have certified (her) unfit for drill in any event if her asthma was poorly controlled or (she) was having abdominal pain".

She said no prison officer or staff member took Ms Lian to her on or before March 2, 2011, to be examined whether she was fit to take part in the drill exercise.

Dr Chawla and Dr Tan are represented by the same team of lawyers from Myintsoe and Selvaraj: Dr Myint Soe, Mr S. Selvaraj and Mr Charles Lin.

## RAFFLES MEDICAL GROUP

**Raffles said in its defence dated Feb 20 that unlike Dr Chawla, Dr Tan was not its employee.**

Instead, it said that he is a specialist in psychiatry with his own private practice.

Represented by law firm Rodyk and Davidson, the medical group added that Ms Lian was seen by the two doctors on multiple occasions before her death. But there were no medical or psychiatric grounds to change her status fitness for drills.

It also said that she had been jailed at least twice on theft charges, and had been sent to drug supervision and treatment centres at least six times since 1998.

Raffles added that Ms Lian had been on psychiatric drugs since 1997 and had a history of substance abuse.

It said that it had provided an appropriate system of medical consultation for the inmates at CWP and did not cause any injury, loss and damages suffered by Ms Lian Huizuan.



**CLAIMS:** Mr Lian Hock Kwee and one of his daughters are now seeking more than \$400,000 in damages from Dr Tan Soo Teng, Dr Narulla Ranjeet Nee Chawla and Raffles Medical Group.

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