

## Case HKPS-CC-20180130 – Disciplinary action

On 30th January 2018, a complaint was lodged against Dr. KOT, Lam Kat Katherine (Dr. KOT), a member of the Hong Kong Psychological Society (HKPS). Due to the difficulty in finding mutually agreed dates for a disciplinary hearing, and the intervening social restrictions brought on by the COVID pandemic, a Disciplinary Board was not convened until December 2023. The discipline proceedings were carried out according to the 2017 By-Laws of the HKPS -Procedures for Handling of Complaints.

After full investigation by Discipline Board (“DB”) (Case No. HKPS-CC-20180130), Dr. KOT was found to have contravened the following sections of the Code of Professional Conduct (2012) (“the Code”) of HKPS while being a Graduate Member, Member of the Division of Counselling Psychology, Registered Psychologist:

Breach	Statement of the breach and particulars	Sections of the Code referred
1st	<p><b>Failure to ensure that clients understand details of treatment activities that they will be engaged in so that they can give informed consent.</b></p> <p>Dr. KOT failed to provide adequate information regarding the choice of therapy options in a way that would be understandable to the Complainant before the start of the group treatment. She failed to take the initiative to explain to the Complainant and to provide sufficient time for the latter to make the decision before giving consent as well as paying for the treatment fee.</p> <p>Dr. KOT failed to provide adequate effective supervision for her staff who might have inadequate professional knowledge on the procedure of collecting consent from the Complainant.</p> <p>Dr. KOT failed to explain to the Complainant that she had the option to refuse or withdraw at any time before the commencement of the</p>	<p>3.3.6, 3.3.7, and 3.3.10</p> <p>[For details, please refer to the relevant “Description of Professional Behaviour and Practices” Chapter 3, Page 15, of the Code.]</p>

	<p>treatment session.</p> <p>Dr. KOT failed to take reasonable steps to ensure that consent was not given under coercion, pressure or undue reward.</p>	
2nd	<p><b>Failure to properly inform clients the aims, purposes, procedures involved, and outcome of their treatment in ways that the clients can understand.</b></p> <p><b>Failure to respect the right of clients who have difficulties in expression to discontinue service when communicated by any means.</b></p> <p>Dr. KOT failed to ensure that the Complainant was well informed of the most suitable treatment options in the light of latest empirical support. Information was not conveyed to the Complainant in a manner that would address the background and vulnerable condition of the Complainant.</p> <p>Dr. KOT exhibited behaviours including arriving late and neglecting scheduled appointments with the Complainant, as well as consuming food during the session, hence showing disrespect towards the latter.</p> <p>Information on discontinuation of service was not explicitly stated or made known to the Complainant. Dr. KOT failed to fully take care of or to be sensitive to the readiness and responsiveness of the Complainant in the treatment process.</p>	<p>3.1.3, 3.4.1</p> <p>[For details, please refer to the relevant “Description of Professional Behaviour and Practices” Chapter 3, Page 13, 15 of the Code.]</p>
3rd	<p><b>Failure to value the responsibilities to clients, to the general public, and to the profession and science of Psychology, including the avoidance and prevention of misuse or abuse of their contributions to the Society.</b></p> <p>Dr. KOT failed to fulfil her responsibility of</p>	<p>2.4</p> <p>[For details, please refer to Ethical Principle C: Responsibility, Chapter 2, Page 9, of the Code.]</p>

	making suitable arrangements to ensure that the treatment was in the Complainant's best interest. Harm was caused by Dr. KOT's mishandling and miscommunication in the treatment process, including neglecting and being late for prearranged treatment sessions with the Complainant.	
4th	<p><b>Failure to clearly inform client and explain cost of professional services involved.</b></p> <p>Dr. KOT failed to supervise her staff in providing clear explanation on pricing and billing for therapy sessions. The Complainant did not receive a complete and clear explanation regarding the payment and billing in advance that was necessary for her understanding.</p>	<p>3.7.1 [For details, please refer to the relevant "Description of Professional Behaviour and Practices" Chapter 3, Page 18, of the Code.]</p>

### **Sanction**

The Discipline Board recommended that Dr. KOT's membership of HKPS be suspended for three years. In addition, Dr. KOT was required to seek and undergo professional supervision to improve on:

- a. how she provides clients with sufficient information regarding the nature, purpose, and course of treatment options;
- b. how she should obtain informed consent from her clients by using organized procedures with reasonable time frame;
- c. the management of therapeutic relationships with clients;
- d. the proper care, respect, and sensitivity to client's needs in the therapeutic process and the awareness on the impact of her behaviours and actions to clients, especially the vulnerable ones; and
- e. improving the administrative procedures at her workplace and proper ensuring professional supervision of her staff.

The Discipline Board's findings and recommendations were endorsed at the Council Meeting on 26 January 2024.

At the end of the 3-year suspension, Dr. KOT may apply to the Council for reinstatement of HKPS membership by providing adequate proof that she has complied with the recommendations set forth in the paragraphs 4a–4e above. Before the reinstatement, Dr. KOT should not identify or imply herself in any form as a current Member of HKPS.