

Medical body strikes practitioner off council register

'Abortion' doctor gets two-year ban

By Ronita Wisniewski

A DOCTOR who performed illegal abortions and falsified medical certificates was yesterday struck off the medical register for two years.

The Medical Council found Dr Lai Sau-kuen guilty of five separate charges, but her penalties, ranging from three months to two years, were to run concurrently.

The council banned Dr Lai, 56, after she pleaded guilty yesterday to two counts of "using an instrument with intent to procure a miscarriage" in late 1990.

Dr Lai had been convicted of the same charges at a court trial two years ago. During that trial, she was slapped with a three-year prison sentence, suspended for two years on each of the two charges, and fined \$250,000. She later

lost an appeal in the High Court.

Dr Lai, who has been practising privately since 1986, was also suspended for six months for "intending" to perform a similar procedure without examining her patient, an undercover police officer.

She was banned for another three months for issuing medical certificates containing information that was "untrue, misleading and improper".

The council made its decision despite a warning by its new legal adviser, John Croxen, that the charge involving the constable "cannot be sustained by description 'did intend'."

The council heard yesterday that on 27 February 1991, Police Constable Leung Lai-yuet visited Dr Lai's clinic in Fa Yuen Street in Kowloon, claiming her period was late.

During the consultation, which was taped as part of a police decoy operation, Const Leung gave Dr Lai a urine sample which actually came from a pregnant colleague.

The doctor believed she was pregnant but since she could not afford a \$4,000 hospital abortion, Dr Lai agreed to perform the procedure in her clinic for \$1,600, Const Leung said.

Const Leung and a police sergeant posing as her husband returned the next day and paid Dr Lai. But before the procedure started, the officers identified themselves and Dr Lai was arrested.

In yesterday's hearing, Dr Lai claimed she found the urine sample to be negative and that the \$1,600 was for an examination she wanted to perform on Const Leung regarding her late period.

Dr Lai also argued that the surgical equipment and medicine — including tranquilisers and drugs to dilate the cervix — seized by police were not necessarily intended to be used for an abortion.

On the other charges, Dr Lai was found to have improperly prepared medical certificates by putting the wrong ages of three female children of parents seeking residency status in Hong Kong.

Dr Lai claimed she treated each of the children when they were two days old, while immigration officials and the Medical Council claimed Dr Lai treated them at age two, meaning they had been in Hong Kong longer than claimed by their parents.

Dr Lai has one month to appeal the Medical Council decision, and in that time is free to practice.

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