

Medical practitioner suspended, reprimanded and fined for professional misconduct

20 November 2014

The State Administrative Tribunal of Western Australia has suspended the medical registration of Dr Paul Langton for 18 months, reprimanded him and fined him \$30,000 for professional misconduct.

The Medical Board of Australia referred the matter to the tribunal in relation to his treatment of a patient in June 2010.

Dr Langton, who was 51 at the time, prescribed the then-18 year-old patient Cymbalta (a medication for anxiety and depression). He then formed a close personal and intimate relationship with the patient.

During the course of the relationship (September 2010 to August 2011) Dr Langton provided medical advice and treatment to the patient, including ongoing prescriptions of Cymbalta, intra-muscular injections of morphine for back pain and antibiotics.

Dr Langton failed to regularly monitor the effects of Cymbalta on the patient, including the effect on her mental state and adverse reactions with other prescribed medications the patient might have been taking.

Dr Langton also prescribed morphine to her without pursuing other appropriate treatment options, including referral to a specialist for investigation or to a physiotherapist to address the back pain.

In November and December 2010 Dr Langton wrote a prescriber's bag prescription for five 30mg injections of morphine and took them to a pharmacy where they were dispensed. Dr Langton administered some of the morphine to the patient and some to himself, both for a non-therapeutic purpose.

At some stage between September 2010 and May 2011 Dr Langton administered propofol (an anaesthetic agent) to the patient, when there was no proper therapeutic purpose to do so.

Dr Langton also failed to record the morphine he procured in 2010 in a register, as is required by the *Poisons Regulations 1965 (WA)*.

The tribunal:

- found Dr Langton had engaged in professional misconduct
- reprimanded him
- fined him \$30,000
- suspended his registration for 18 months from 21 November 2014, and
- ordered him to pay the Board's legal costs of \$80,000.

It ordered that the following conditions be placed on his registration, including:

- undergoing, at his own expense, assessment by a Board-appointed psychiatrist at four monthly intervals, after which the psychiatrist is to report to the Board after each attendance, again at Dr Langton's expense, and
- attending, at his expense, sessions with a Board-approved clinical psychologist at three monthly intervals for counseling about boundary management, with the psychologist to report to the Board every six months at Dr Langton's expense.

The Board is to review the conditions 13 months after the date Dr Langton returns to practise.

The full decision is on the [tribunal website](#).

For more information

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