

Medical practitioner reprimanded and suspended for unsatisfactory professional conduct

9 December 2014

On 4 November 2014, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal reprimanded Dr Bharat Doolabh, suspended his registration for 12 months and imposed conditions on his registration as a medical practitioner.

The Medical Board of Australia referred a disciplinary matter to the tribunal alleging that Dr Doolabh had engaged in unsatisfactory professional conduct under the *Health Practitioners (Disciplinary Proceedings) Act 1999* (Qld), which was in place in June 2009, before the introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

The allegations relate to obstetric care that Dr Doolabh provided in 2008 and 2009. In November 2008 Dr Doolabh was the obstetrician responsible for delivering a baby girl at the John Flynn Private Hospital. Dr Doolabh used a ventouse extraction to deliver the baby, who died soon after birth. The autopsy report stated that the cause of death was birth asphyxia due to the effects of both a prolonged second stage of labour and a tight umbilical cord around the neck.

In July 2009 Dr Doolabh delivered another baby girl using a ventouse extraction. Upon delivery, the baby was extremely pale and floppy and she suffered oedema of the scalp. The baby was transferred to the neonatal unit at the Mater Private Hospital in Brisbane, but her condition deteriorated and on 3 July 2009 life support was withdrawn and she died. The autopsy report stated that the cause of death was hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy, Sarnat Grade 3 and subgaleal haemorrhage.

Dr Doolabh made a number of concessions about his conduct, including that he had engaged in unsatisfactory professional conduct in his delivery of these two babies. Some allegations remained in dispute at the hearing. Relevantly, the hospital's poor medical records limited evidence available to the Board. This has been the subject of other proceedings about a nurse involved in the delivery of one of the babies.

The tribunal found Dr Doolabh had behaved in a way that constituted unsatisfactory professional conduct, on the grounds that he failed to:

- examine and review the baby born in 2008, and provide immediate assisted delivery and advice and direction at the birth, and
- arrange a paediatrician to assist at both births in 2008 and 2009.

In addition to reprimanding Dr Doolabh and suspending his registration for 12 months from 12 May 2011, the tribunal imposed a number of conditions on his registration. These include that he must only work as an assistant, and that the Board must approve any experienced specialists working with him.

The tribunal also ordered that the details of the reprimand be recorded on the Board's [register of practitioners](#) for 12 months.

The reasons for decision are published on the [AustLII website](#).

For more information

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