

25th May 2004

NEWS RELEASE

Dundee biomedical scientist suspended for one year

A biomedical scientist from Dundee has been suspended from the Register for one year by the Health Professions Council (HPC). The hearing on the 21st May was the first ever full health hearing of the HPC, which can now consider the health of the people on its register, when deciding whether they are fit to practise.

A panel of the Health committee heard evidence that Sarah Turgoose was unfit to practise because of her physical and mental health. It was alleged that during 2002 and 2003 while she was employed by Tayside University Hospitals NHS, she attended work while intoxicated, and fell asleep outside while she was supposed to be on duty. The panel also heard that in May 2003 she attended work whilst intoxicated, and then lost a specimen she was working on, and caused serious delay to processing three further specimens.

Mary Crawford, chair of the panel, said, "It was noted that all four allegations had been put to Mrs Turgoose but she had elected not to respond to them.

"The panel ... concluded that Sarah Turgoose had failed to:

1. act in the best interests of her patients;
2. provide her managers and colleagues important information about her conduct, competence or health;
3. maintain proper and effective communication between colleagues; and
4. keep accurate records."

The panel also found that Sarah Turgoose had not met the professional standards that biomedical scientists must meet.

Mary Crawford also said, "The panel considered that the risk to patients of the actions of 29th May 2003 were so serious as to cause them grave concern. This behaviour placed patients at immediate risk of misdiagnosis and or delayed treatment.

"Having considered the evidence of the health problem acknowledged by the registrant and contained in the documentation before the panel today including a recent medical report, the panel have concluded that an order directing the registrar to suspend Sarah Turgoose for the maximum period of one year is appropriate."

The Health Professions Council is an independent, UK-wide health regulator set up to protect the public. It sets standards for twelve health professions. The HPC only registers people who meet its standards for their professional skills, behaviour and health, and will take action against people who do not.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

1. A biomedical scientist analyses specimens from patients to provide data to help doctors diagnose and treat disease.
2. Full details of this case including the notice of allegation and panel's findings, will be posted on the HPC website here:
<http://www.hpc-uk.org/legal/ftp/HPC-03-ML-058.htm>
3. Information about the HPC's fitness to practise proceedings can be found on the HPC website here: www.hpc-uk.org/legal