

56 weeks' jail for man who abused mother

Master's student punched 68-year-old's face, hit her groin with metal padlock and barred her from taking shower

Shaffiq Alkhatib
Court Correspondent

A former National University of Singapore (NUS) graduate student who punched his mother in the face and used a metal padlock to hit her groin was sentenced yesterday to 56 weeks' jail.

Andy Koh Ju Hua, a master's student at the time of the offences, pleaded guilty on March 16 to four counts of voluntarily causing hurt to the 68-year-old woman.

The Singaporean, now 30, had also barred her from taking a shower or making noise at home. Deputy Public Prosecutor Mag-

dalene Huang had earlier urged the court to sentence Koh to at least 50 weeks' jail, stressing that he had ill treated and mentally abused his mother.

Citing reports from Pave Integrated Services for Individual and Family Protection Specialist Centre, she said Koh had banned his mother from drinking any liquids other than plain water.

On one occasion, he ordered her to stand by a sink with an ice pack to her face for 12 hours after punching her.

He would watch her from his room and threatened to hit her if she put her hand down.

On other occasions, he struck his mother's head with a remote con-

trol, leaving a scar, and threatened to hit her genitals with a hammer, the court heard.

In an earlier statement, NUS said that Koh is no longer with the university. Its spokesman added that he had been on a leave of absence since August 2019.

He did not return to his studies after his leave and his candidature was terminated in January this year.

His mother had run away on several occasions to seek shelter with other family members.

She had also been hospitalised and placed in a safe house. But she insisted on returning home, where her husband also lives, each time.

The court heard that the mother initially refused to make a police report as she did not want to jeopardise her son's future.

The acts of abuse started in 2017 and Koh, who claimed to suffer from a psychotic disorder, also

kneed his mother in the groin in January 2018. The woman then called a relative for help.

Her niece found her at another block of flats in an unkempt state. The mother was also complaining of pain in her lower abdomen.

Her niece wanted to call the police but the older woman refused. When she went to the hospital, she said she had had a fall, in order not to implicate her son.

In December 2018, he hooked a metal padlock around his finger and swung it towards his mother's genital area multiple times as he was "angry over certain issues".

She called her brother for help, and he found her with a swollen face and bloodstains on her gown in her groin area. The police were called but she told them that she had fallen in the toilet.

In June last year, her nephew called the police to report a case of family violence after she escaped to a relative's house.

She finally told the doctors that her son had punched her and that she felt pain in her lips and chin.

Police investigations then found that Koh had punched his mother in the mouth three times.

The Straits Times went to the victim's flat in Punggol yesterday but no one answered the door.

Neighbours on the same floor who ST spoke to said they were un-

aware of Koh's acts of abuse. Software engineer Ashok Daramuni, 35, said his family moved in at the start of 2019 and has never interacted with the Kohs.

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Additional reporting by
Dominic Low

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Andy Koh Ju Hua pleaded guilty on March 16 to four counts of voluntarily causing hurt to his mother, who initially refused to make a police report as she did not want to jeopardise her son's future.

Doc suspended for 10 months over derogatory, abusive e-mails about SMC

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

A surgeon has been suspended from practice for 10 months for sending more than 120 derogatory and abusive e-mails about the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) and people linked to it.

Dr Pang Ah San, a general surgeon who works at SC Chia Clinic at Mount Alvernia Hospital, also has to pay a penalty of \$10,000, remove all derogatory social media posts against the SMC and people it appointed, and pay all costs of the disciplinary hearing.

Dr Pang, who is in his 60s, had faced two prior disciplinary hearings – for using a "loop" percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy tube on four patients between 2007 and 2009.

This method of providing a permanent way to feed through a gastrostomy tube is not generally accepted by the medical profession.

Following a complaint by the family of one of the patients, Dr Pang was found guilty of professional misconduct and fined \$10,000 in 2012. He appealed against the judgment by the Court of Three Judges, which upheld the disciplinary committee's verdict.

A second disciplinary hearing was convened based on the similar treatment of the three other patients. This time, in 2014, he was suspended for six months and fined \$10,000.

Dr Pang was also ordered to pay all costs for both the disciplinary hearings as well as for the appeal, which amounted to \$510,412.29.

He failed to pay these costs, but a bankruptcy application was dismissed in November 2015 when he showed the court he had more than \$1 million in liquid funds.

When he still did not pay the costs, the SMC applied to get the money from his bank account, only to be told he no longer had an active account with that bank.

The SMC took further action against him in April 2016.

For contempt of court in not providing information on his assets, Dr Pang was imprisoned for seven days in October 2016. A bankruptcy order was made against him a year later.

The current disciplinary hearing against him was for the more than 120 e-mails – which together with attachments, totalled more than 670 pages – he had sent to "numerous recipients" including doctors, the Health Minister and the media between 2012 and 2017.

In its grounds of decision published this month, the SMC stated: "The e-mails contained statements that were highly derogatory and abusive."

The e-mails attacked the SMC's authority and integrity, and impugned the conduct of the complaints and disciplinary committees, the taxation proceedings, bankruptcy proceedings and execution proceedings for the enforcement of the taxed costs.

The comments in the e-mails included these:

- One Singaporean hijacked the mighty SMC.
- The prosecuting counsel has "a track record of deceit" and "is a child of vice".
- The expert witness lacked "intellectual honesty and moral integrity".
- "When a liar can act as its expert counsel, a terrorist must be in charge at the Medical Council".

Dr Pang did not deny sending the e-mails. In his defence, he said the contents of the e-mails were true and that he was justified in sending them.

The tribunal disagreed. "We found that he had made highly derogatory statements in the e-mails without any justification, and that the entire course of his conduct in sending the derogatory e-mails was improper and brought disrepute to the medical profession."

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Former SMU associate director charged with accepting \$472,000 in bribes

Wong Shiying

A former Singapore Management University (SMU) associate director was yesterday charged with accepting \$472,000 in bribes.

Christopher Tan Toh Nghee had allegedly accepted illegal funds from three men to advance their business interests with the university between August 2017 and November 2019.

According to Tan's LinkedIn profile, he was the associate director of business development at SMU. His employment with the university ceased in January last year.

The 43-year-old faces 50 charges for offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The three men, who were also charged yesterday, are International Alliance Marketing director Kenneth Lum Hsien Loong, CJ Syn-ergy director Cher Kheng Tan and Assetualize managing director Jeffery Long Chee Kin.

Lum faces 35 charges for offering the bribes, while Long and Cher face eight and seven charges, respectively, for such offences.

Tan and Cher also each face one charge of giving false information to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) and one charge of intentionally obstructing the course of justice.

According to court documents, Tan had allegedly given false information to CPIB officers that the money given to him by Cher was for the repayment of a loan.

Tan also allegedly deleted an electronic note from his mobile phone which contained records of the payments he had received and expected to receive from Lum, Cher and Long.

Cher had allegedly deleted WhatsApp chat logs with Tan and an electronic note from his phone which contained records of payments he gave to Tan.

All four will return to court on April 20.

An SMU spokesman said the university takes a strong stand against any form of misconduct.

"We expect all our employees to observe the highest standards of conduct and obey the law at all times as they perform their duties. As the case is currently before the courts, it would not be ap-

Christopher Tan Toh Nghee, whose employment with SMU has ceased, allegedly accepted illegal funds from three men to advance their business interests with the university. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CH

propriate for SMU to comment further," he said.

For each count of corruption, offenders can be jailed for up to five years, or fined up to \$100,000, or both.

For giving false information relating to corruption offences, a per-

son may be jailed for up to a year, fined up to \$10,000, or both.

A person convicted of intentionally obstructing the course of justice can be jailed for up to seven years, fined, or both.

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Newlyweds Kate Fotheringham and Wayne Bell in Wingham, New South Wales. Behind them is a bridge submerged in floodwaters, which made it impossible for the bride and her family to drive from their home to Wingham for the wedding on Saturday. Instead, the bride and her family were transported by helicopter after she sought help on social media. PHOTO: REUTERS

Australian couple say 'I do', come hell or high water

SYDNEY • Ms Kate Fotheringham's wedding plans did not include a natural disaster, but that was not going to stop the ceremony in a small town in New South Wales.

She woke on Saturday to find herself trapped at her parents' home by rising floodwaters in the town of Taree. The deluge had merged the only bridge to the neighbouring town of Wingham, where she was due to marry her fiancée Wayne Bell at 3pm that day.

"It took three months to plan the wedding, 12 hours for it to go to hell and six hours for it to come together again," Ms Fotheringham told The Guardian. "I did have a bit of a meltdown – a bit of a cry – and said this just wasn't funny anymore. This just sucks. Then I think I also said: 'We're just going to have to deal with this.' Today's the day."

The couple set about planning a complex logistical operation to get the bride and her family to the venue on time. Ms Fotheringham called for help on social media.

Soon, a local TV station rang to offer most of their friends and family a rescue, and not long after, confirmation came that a helicopter was on its way from Port Macquarie.

"Wayne rang and said, 'You have and, with the guests trapped, it to be ready in 50 minutes,'" The Guardian quoted Ms Fotheringham as saying. The helicopter dropped them off in Wingham.

Some of the people whose services they had engaged for the wedding were stranded elsewhere. But they managed to find a caterer and a hairdresser in Wingham. And

were already in town.

Afterwards, Ms Fotheringham said the reception was "massive" and "the town with nowhere to go, it continued on until Sunday."

"Explaining it, it doesn't ever sound real," she said. "It's like you can't believe that we made it up. I don't believe that we pulled it off."

SEE WORLD A13