

PUBLIC RECORD**Date:** 5 February 2024

Medical Practitioner's name:	Dr Julia PIPER
GMC reference number:	2637833
Primary medical qualification:	BM BS 1980 University of Nottingham
Type of case	Outcome on impairment
Misconduct	Not impaired

Summary of outcome

Order revoked

Legally Qualified Chair:

Legally Qualified Chair:	Ms Sharmistha Michaels
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Review on the Papers

This case was reviewed on the papers, with the agreement of both parties, by a Legally Qualified Chair.

Overarching Objective

Throughout the decision making process the chair has borne in mind the statutory overarching objective as set out in s1 Medical Act 1983 (the 1983 Act) to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public, to promote and maintain public confidence in the medical profession, and to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of that profession.

Review on the papers by a legally qualified chair of a direction under section 35(D)(5)

1. I have noted the background to Dr Piper's case, which was first considered by a medical practitioners Tribunal in May 2023. The Allegation that has led to Dr Piper's hearing can be summarised as concerns relating to prescribing, communications with other doctors and probity. She is alleged to have prescribed medications for herself on 18 occasions over a four-year period, for Patient A (XXX), on 33 occasions over 13 years and Patient B (XXX) on 31 occasions over 17 years. The drugs prescribed included XXX.
2. It was further alleged that Dr Piper did not inform either Patient A's or B's NHS GP of what she had done and stated in five separate appraisals between 2015 and 2021 that she did not prescribe for herself or XXX, or words to that effect.
3. The initial concerns were raised with the GMC on 22 November 2021 by Dr Piper's Responsible Officer ('RO'). The referral to the GMC came following an inspection by the Care Quality Commission ('CQC'), which found irregularities in Dr Piper's dispensing book. This assessment had been undertaken with Dr Piper's agreement as she was seeking to offer medicinal cannabis. These allegations were all admitted and found proven.
4. On the 19 May 2023 the Tribunal found Dr Piper's fitness to practice to be impaired by reason of her misconduct. The Tribunal considered that Dr Piper had fully addressed the issues regarding prescribing and communication and that there was no longer a significant risk of Dr Piper putting patients at risk in the future through inappropriate prescribing and poor communication.
5. In deciding the risk of Dr Piper repeating her dishonesty, the Tribunal looked at the evidence of her insight and remediation. The Tribunal found that there was significant evidence of remediation, which demonstrated Dr Piper's developing insight and reminded itself again of her early admissions. It noted that Dr Piper had acknowledged that the process of remediation and developing insight was still on going. The Tribunal acknowledged that Dr Piper had taken steps to improve her practice and conduct and that there was nothing to suggest that Dr Piper had been dishonest since September 2021. The Tribunal however found that Dr Piper's insight was not yet complete, as she had not demonstrated that she fully understood the seriousness of the effect of her dishonesty on the medical profession and its effect on public confidence in the profession.

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6. The Tribunal concluded that while the risk of repetition was low , because of the importance of honesty in the medical profession, a finding of impairment was required. The Tribunal further found Dr Piper’s fitness to practise was also impaired by reason of her misconduct because of the need to maintain and promote proper professional standards and the need to maintain public trust in the profession.
7. That Tribunal determined to suspend Dr Piper’s registration for a period of 9 months. The Tribunal also directed a review of Dr Piper’s case and stated that at a review hearing the onus would be on Dr Piper to demonstrate how she had further developed her insight and maintained an honest life.
8. To provide assistance at this review the Tribunal at the previous hearing recommended that Dr Piper provided a further reflective piece, evidence of any further study and any other information that she considered will assist.
9. Dr Piper and the GMC have agreed that this review should be considered on the papers in accordance with Rule 21B of the General Medical Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2004. They have provided agreed terms of a decision which I could make at this review.
10. I have considered all of the evidence presented to me, and the agreed submissions made on behalf of Dr Piper and by the GMC. In the submissions, Dr Piper and the GMC agree that Dr Piper’s fitness to practise is not impaired and that the sanction currently in place should be revoked.
11. I have taken into account that since the previous order was made Dr Piper has provided the following:
 - Dr Piper’s reflections document
 - Letter from Dr C confirming attendance at psychotherapy sessions.
 - Letter from Dr D confirming attendance at day full time retreat to help face the importance of truthfulness.
 - Letter from Person E confirming attendance at life coaching sessions.
 - Letter from Person F spiritual mentor and personal development coach.
 - Course Certificate - Probity and Ethics

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12. Dr Piper in her further reflective statement has apologised for her misconduct and set out that she has continued to ensure that she is always open and honest in her communications. Dr Piper provided examples of difficult communications with doctors that she could not provide them with employment because of her suspension as well as decommissioning her 28-year-old medical practice to ensure she did not act in breach of her suspension.

13. Dr Piper further explains that she had sought advice from colleagues and experts, including Dr C, XXX who has provided a report. Dr C explains that:

'Over the course of our sessions, Dr Piper demonstrated good insight into the nature of her actions that led to the GMC disciplinary process, being honest about where she made specific errors in judgement. She has reflected much on her own behaviour, taken steps to remediate herself and to lead a more truthful life.'

14. I have borne in mind that Dr Piper has provided evidence of targeted remediation; she has continued to undertake continuing professional development and has provided evidence of additional courses. She has reviewed the work she had previously completed with a barrister in relation to honesty, probity, ethics and integrity in the medical world.

15. I have noted that Dr Piper attended an 8-day full time retreat in November 2023 with Dr D who has provided a report, which notes that part of the reason for her attendance was to help face the importance of truthfulness. Dr D said that during team meetings it became apparent to the team that Dr Piper was transparent and honest regarding the allegations that were made against her.

16. Dr Piper also has attended five sessions of a life coaching programme with Ms E, who provided a report dated 4 December 2023 in which she states that she found Dr Piper to have a very good understanding of truth. I have also had sight of various letters of support. Dr Piper also provided a certificate in completion of Probity and Ethics dated 21 July 2023.

17. I have borne in mind the statutory overarching objective which is to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public, to promote and maintain public confidence in the medical profession, and to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for the medical profession.

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18. I have determined that Dr Piper's fitness to practise is no longer impaired by reason of her misconduct.

19. In reaching this decision, I have taken account of the significant evidence provided by Dr Piper of her developed insight into her misconduct. She has provided robust evidence of her fuller understanding of the nature of her actions, and the significant steps she has taken to further develop her insight and demonstrate her continued honesty, which is supported by the reports and supportive letters provided on her behalf. She has also shown a developed understanding of the circumstances which led to her misconduct. In light of this developed insight and understanding and the remedial action taken I am satisfied that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired.

20. I therefore direct that Dr Piper's current period of suspended registration be revoked with immediate effect.

21. Notification of this decision will be served on Dr Piper in accordance with the Medical Act 1983, as amended.