

HEARING HEARD IN PUBLIC**MEAKIN, Jade Elizabeth****Registration No: 268256****PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT COMMITTEE****OCTOBER 2022****Outcome: Erased with Immediate Suspension**

MEAKIN, Jade Elizabeth, a dental hygienist and therapist, Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy University of Leeds 2016, was summoned to appear before the Professional Conduct Committee on 24 October 2022 for an inquiry into the following charge:

Charge

“That being a registered dental care professional:

1. On 15 July 2021, you were convicted at West Yorkshire Magistrates’ Court of the offence of having made four false instruments, namely a prescription for a scheduled drug, with the intention that you or another should use the same to induce another to accept it as genuine and by reason of so accepting it to do or not to do some act to his own or any other person’s prejudice, contrary to Section 1 of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981.

AND that by reason of the matters alleged above your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of conviction.”

Ms Meakin was not present and was not represented. On 24 October 2022 the Chairman announced a statement on proof of service and announced the findings of fact to the Counsel for the GDC:

“This hearing was conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams. Miss Meakin was neither present nor represented at the hearing.

On behalf of the General Dental Council (GDC), Mr Sykes submitted that the notice of hearing had been served on Miss Meakin and that the hearing should proceed in her absence.

The Committee was satisfied that the notice of hearing had been served on Miss Meakin in accordance with the requirements of the General Dental Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2006. The Committee was satisfied that all reasonable efforts had been made by the GDC to send notice of this hearing to Miss Meakin. It was clear to the Committee from the correspondence that Miss Meakin is aware of this hearing and its purpose. She confirmed in writing that she would not be attending this

hearing and instead provided written submissions and documents for consideration by the Committee when deciding her case. Having regard to all the circumstances, the Committee therefore determined that it would be fair and in the public interest to proceed with the hearing, notwithstanding Miss Meakin's absence. She had voluntarily waived her right to attend or be represented and there was nothing to suggest that adjourning the hearing would make her attendance any more likely at a future date.

The Committee had regard to the all the evidence and documents which had been put before it.

The Committee did not hear live evidence.

The Committee had regard to the oral submissions made by Mr Sykes and to the written submissions which had been made by Miss Meakin.

The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

As part of the factual inquiry, the Committee found the charge proved as follows.

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| 1. | <p><i>On 15 July 2021, you were convicted at West Yorkshire Magistrates' Court of the offence of having made four false instruments, namely a prescription for a scheduled drug, with the intention that you or another should use the same to induce another to accept it as genuine and by reason of so accepting it to do or not to do some act to his own or any other person's prejudice, contrary to Section 1 of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981.</i></p> <p>Proved.</p> <p>The Committee noted the memorandum of conviction dated 29 July 2021 from the West Yorkshire Magistrates' Court, which records that Miss Meakin had been convicted on 15 July 2021 on her guilty plea of, between 04 November 2020 and 13 January 2021, making four false instruments, namely a prescription for a scheduled drug, with the intention that she or another should use the same to induce another to accept it as genuine and by reason of so accepting it to do or not to do some act or another person's prejudice, contrary to Section 1 of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981. The memorandum of conviction records that she was fined £800.00, was ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £80.00 and costs of £85.00. The memorandum of conviction was unsigned but the Committee had no reason to doubt its authenticity and accuracy. The memorandum of conviction was consistent with the information recorded in the Police National Computer (PNC) record dated 19 July 2021, which had been obtained by the GDC for the purpose of these regulatory proceedings.</p> <p>Further, Miss Meakin admits in her various responses as part of these proceedings that she was convicted of the offence in question.</p> |
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	Accordingly, the Committee found this charge proved.
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We move to Stage 2.”

On 25 October 2022 the Chairman announced the determination as follows:

“Having announced its findings of fact, the Committee then proceeded to “Stage two” of the hearing to decide whether Miss Meakin’s fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of her conviction and, if so, what action (if any) to take in respect of her registration.

Background

Miss Meakin qualified in 2016 and first registered with the GDC as a dental hygienist and dental therapist in January 2017. The conduct to which her conviction relates involved four prescriptions dated 4 November 2020, 24 November 2020, 2 December 2020 and 13 January 2021 for Azzalure. Each prescription recorded that the Azzalure (two vials) was to be administered for “Glabellar Lines” with the prescription on 24 November 2020 also including a prescription for sodium chloride 0.9% solution “To constitute Azzalure”.

The prescriptions purported to be issued and signed for by a dentist (the “Informant”) with whom Miss Meakin had previously worked. Each contained the details of the dental practice **[REDACTED]** where Miss Meakin was currently working and in respect of which the Informant had no connection. The prescriptions purported to be for four different patients who were stated to have attended face-to-face consultations on the date of each of the prescriptions.

Miss Meakin had forged the prescriptions, including the handwritten signatures purporting to be those of the Informant. It is unclear for what purpose she had committed the forgery and what had happened to the vials of Azzalure which had been dispensed to her as a result. It is not known whether those vials had been administered and, if so, to whom, in what circumstances and for what purpose. It is also not known whether the names and addresses of the patients in the forged prescriptions were fictitious or whether the details of actual patients at **[REDACTED]** had been used.

Miss Meakin’s acts of forgery were discovered when the Superintendent Pharmacist wished to verify the identity of the Informant in relation to an earlier prescription, as the Informant’s name had been incorrectly recorded on the prescription and no GDC registration number had been given. The Superintendent Pharmacist was therefore unable to verify the identity the Informant by searching the GDC’s online Register. In her email to the GDC dated 4 February 2021, the Superintendent Pharmacist set out that she initially contacted **[REDACTED]** but was advised that no dentist with the name of the Informant had ever worked there. The Superintendent Pharmacist then attempted to contact Miss Meakin to request contact details for the Informant. In response, Miss Meakin requested cancellation of the current order from the 13

January 2021 prescription on the basis that the patient no longer required treatment. The Superintendent Pharmacist made a further attempt to contact Miss Meakin because of her suspicions regarding the prescription and the reason for the cancellation of the order. Miss Meakin replied by leaving a voicemail message in which she *“conveyed they [Miss Meakin] had seen patient F2F with informant in the same room in [REDACTED] on 12/1/2021 and who had issued Rx”*. The Superintendent Pharmacist then *“requested for registrant [Miss Meakin] to contact informant to contact us to verify their identity, requesting their GDC number and a form of photo ID. Registrant understood and said they would comply with request.”* This was the last contact which the Superintendent Pharmacist had with Miss Meakin.

The Informant subsequently contacted the Superintendent Pharmacist by email to express concern that Miss Meakin had forged the prescription in question.

The Superintendent Pharmacist reported the matter to Police.

In an email to the organisation providing her indemnity (the British Dental Association) dated 14 January 2021, the Informant explained that she had received a message from Miss Meakin on 14 January 2021 *“advising me that the supplier is unable to verify my identity with the GDC and that I should call them to verify. She advised that this was in relation to a previous prescription which I recall providing in July 2020 for which I signed and verified, at [REDACTED]”*. The Informant explained that she was surprised that the supplier was asking her to call them, rather than contacting her directly and that she was surprised that she was being contacted some months after the prescription had been issued. The Informant stated that Miss Meakin then sent her a copy of the prescription in question. The Informant stated that she could see that the prescription incorrectly recorded her name, that her signature had been forged and that the prescription was dated in January 2021. The Informant stated that Miss Meakin *“owned up to forging prescriptions bearing my incorrect details on at least 5 occasions and assured me that she will take the necessary steps to remedy her wrongs.”*

In a further email to the British Dental Association, the Informant clarified that the prescription she had issued to Miss Meakin was issued in December 2019 and not in July 2020. She stated that she had worked with Miss Meakin at [REDACTED] for six months, that her last contact with Miss Meakin was in December 2019 and that she had never worked at [REDACTED].

The Informant reported her concerns to the GDC on 18 January 2021.

The Police report into this matter, which is undated, records that:

...During December 2019, the defendant [Miss Meakin] approached the victim [the Informant] and asked her to sign a prescription for Botox, [...]. The victim did not have a problem with this, and she signed a prescription and emailed [REDACTED] her ID. This is the only time she had done this.

During the pandemic, the victim and defendant were not furloughed and due to this the defendant was “out of pocket”. The defendant left the practice and moved to [REDACTED] and the victim did not hear from the defendant or work with her again.

The defendant contacted the victim on 15th January 2021, and the victim replied via Whatsapp. The defendant told the victim that she had prescribed Botox using the template prescription that the victim had authorised in 2019. [REDACTED] needed to verify the victim’s details and the defendant asked the victim if she would contact [REDACTED] to do this. She stated that if the victim didn’t verify her details, [REDACTED] would know that the defendant hadn’t used a prescriber and that she was in trouble.

It didn’t quite register with the victim, what the defendant was telling her. The victim assumed the defendant had cancelled her wedding and had not used the prescription from 2019, and that it had gone out of date. The defendant went on to say that [REDACTED] wanted to confirm that the defendant had not submitted a false prescription and she stated that she would not do it again.

The victim stated that she could not remember what she had written on the prescription as she had signed it over two years ago and asked that [REDACTED] contact her. The defendant then sent a photo shot of the prescription to the victim and at this point the victim realised that the prescription was not in her writing and that the prescription had been forged. The victim asked the defendant if she had signed it and the defendant replied, saying that she had tried to re-create the signature from the original prescription that had been authorised by the victim, however, the defendant made out that the victim had been ok with this. The victim was annoyed and told the defendant that she had not told her that she could do this and that she should have asked first. The victim told the defendant that she had never given her permission to do this and that it was illegal. The victim stated that if the defendant ended up overdosing someone or there was a bad reaction to the Botox, it would be the victim’s name on the line.

The victim cannot believe that the defendant referred to the prescription the victim had signed in 2019 as a template. She had never told or given the defendant permission to re-use the prescription or forge her details.

Miss Meakin appeared before the Interim Orders Committee (IOC) on 16 February 2021. The transcript of that hearing records that she stated the following to the IOC when giving her version of events:

...Just in terms of everything, basically everything that’s in the bundle I am putting my hands up to it basically. In terms of the forged signatures, I think that came as a surprise to [the Informant] but she did that initial prescription for me at [REDACTED] and we had a very casual verbal agreement that she didn’t mind me using her details, which is why when [REDACTED] contacted me about a prescription to query it, which is why I texted [the Informant] straightaway, if I was forging a prescription without her having any knowledge that definitely would not have been the course of

action I would have taken, so she knows a little bit more about it than kind of what she's portrayed but I think she didn't realise it involved me completely forging the signature so when I text her and said, "Look, it's been queried", and I

sent her a picture of the prescription and she saw it said **[REDACTED]** and she replied to that message saying "Just put the right details, Jade, just put **[REDACTED]** and then she clocked the signature so I think she didn't realise how much I was going to forge but she did portray that she was happy for me to casually do a few prescriptions here and there...

In response to questions of clarification from Mr Shaw, a member of the IOC, Miss Meakin is recorded in the transcript as stating:

MS MEAKIN: **[REDACTED]** where I've been working up until recently, there I worked with a dentist called [...] and during the pandemic he was really struggling with his supplier to purchase the product so I ordered it from my account using [the Informant] information to keep a stock at **[REDACTED]** for him to use.

MR SHAW: You are saying you didn't administer it yourself?

MS MEAKIN: No, that was for his patients.

MR SHAW: But you said one was for you, did you say that?

MS MEAKIN: The early prescriptions, some of them were for me that I administered to myself but the ones that are more recent were for [...], for his patients.

The IOC made an interim suspension order, which remains in force on Miss Meakin's registration.

In her written submissions to this Committee on 27 September 2022, Miss Meakin stated: "...I try to pinpoint why I made the complete error of being dishonest and working against legal guidelines, potentially ending my career permanently. Truthfully there is no valid reason or explanation as to why I did this as it is completely wrong from every angle..."

Submissions at Stage two

Mr Sykes submitted that Miss Meakin's fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of her conviction and that the appropriate outcome in this case would be a period of suspension for 12 months with a review.

In her written submissions, Miss Meakin discussed the context in which her actions occurred, her remorse, her commitment to the practice of dentistry, her achievements during her career, the impact of the interim order of suspension, and her aspiration to be allowed to return to practice. She stated:

The prescriptions that were submitted were to either order Azzalure (Botox alternative) to use on myself, or to order to keep as stock at the practice I was working at, for the Dentist to use on his own patients. The company that he was using to order product from was closed during Covid, so I simply thought that I was

doing him a favour and fulfilling his request. I can absolutely hand on heart say that I would never harm another person and it would never cross my mind to administer a substance to another person outside of guidelines, this was an example of a very silly shortcut. I was also under the impression that the person whose name I ordered this under, was happy for me to do

so, but this seems to have been a miscommunication which came to light immediately on contacting her once the prescriptions were questioned.

...

I understand the seriousness in my case and do not expect you to make your decision lightly. I would like you to consider that ending my suspension is no easy way out. I still have a large hill to climb and know that even with my GDC registration reinstated, I am not very employable on paper at all. By no means does ending my suspension mean that this is firmly behind me, I am choosing to learn from this experience and take this forward with me in for future work.

I feel the suspension has been appropriate, and has given me sufficient time to reflect on my actions, learn a lesson, and develop a good mindset going forward to work as hard as necessary to reach my targets of returning to work and proving the value I can bring to the dental team and overall profession, with full respect for the guidelines and legalities.

Decision

The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

The Committee had regard to the *Guidance for the Practice Committees, including Indicative Sanctions Guidance* (October 2016, last revised December 2020).

The Committee first considered whether Miss Meakin's fitness to practise as a dental hygienist and/or dental therapist is currently impaired by reason of her conviction. Miss Meakin's criminal offending was not one isolated incident but was perpetrated on four occasions over a period of several weeks. It involved using her position to forge prescriptions in order to obtain prescription only medicine. As a registered dental hygienist and dental therapist, Miss Meakin had no prescription rights. In order to obtain the drug, she forged the signature of a dentist with whom she had previously worked and entered false practice and patient details. In the Committee's view, this was high-level premeditated fraud, repeated on four occasions. Her forgery was sophisticated and resulted in her obtaining prescription only medicine which had not been lawfully prescribed. The Committee had regard to the explanation which Miss Meakin put forward to the IOC and to this Committee, that her forging of the earlier prescriptions was to obtain the prescription only medicine for her personal use and that her forging of the later prescriptions was simply to assist a dentist at **[REDACTED]** in obtaining Azzalure for the treatment of his patients, owing to supply issues he was facing during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee could find no rational or logical basis on which it could conclude that this was likely to have been

the case. It makes no sense at all that Miss Meakin and the other dentist would resort to acts of forgery in order to obtain a prescription only medicine which the dentist could easily have obtained himself by issuing a prescription in his own name.

The Committee considered that the explanation given by Miss Meakin to the IOC and to this Committee was an attempt by her to minimise or cover up her criminal conduct. It had particular regard to her submission that *"this was a very silly shortcut"* and *"a miscommunication"*. The Committee considered that this demonstrated total lack of understanding of the gravity of her actions. In addition, the Committee considered that there were also earlier attempts by her to cover up her forgery: in response to the Superintendent Pharmacist's concerns, she falsely informed the Superintendent Pharmacist that she had been present in the consultation room with the patient and the Informant and had witnessed the Informant issue the prescription; she then also attempted to mislead the Informant when contacting her and asking her to telephone the supplier to verify her identity.

Miss Meakin's forging of the prescriptions was not, in the Committee's judgement, simply intended as a benign attempt to assist the practitioner(s) with whom she worked to obtain stock or to reissue a prescription to her for her personal use: they were serious acts of calculated fraud which amounted to criminal conduct and which were not, on the evidence before the Committee, authorised by any other practitioner. In forging the prescriptions, Miss Meakin undermined the professional role and duties of the other members of the dental team with whom she had worked and whose trust had been placed in her. She also undermined the professional role and duties of the pharmacist(s) to whom she presented the forged prescriptions. In the Committee's judgment, her conduct was a most serious departure from the standards of the profession, as encompassed by Standard 9.1 of the GDC's *Standards for the Dental Team* (September 2013), which states that: *"You must ensure that your conduct, both at work and in your personal life, justifies patients' trust in you and the public's trust in the dental profession"*.

The Committee does not know what happened to the prescription only medicines. By obtaining prescription only medicine, described by her as a "Botox alternative", without that drug being prescribed by a dentist, she potentially put patients at a risk of harm were she to have treated them. Miss Meakin provided evidence of her training to administer Botox and dermal fillers for aesthetic purposes and of her indemnity cover in relation to such procedures. However, this does not address the question of her fitness to practise in relation to forging prescriptions. The Committee noted also that her indemnity is unlikely to be valid for procedures which involved the administering of a prescription only medicine which had not been prescribed by a dentist and which had been obtained by her forging a signature of a dentist, among other details in the prescription.

The Committee therefore determined that Miss Meakin had acted in a way which put patients at an unwarranted risk of harm.

The Committee also determined that Miss Meakin had acted in a way which was in breach of fundamental tenets of the profession, that she had acted dishonestly and that she had acted in a way which was liable to bring the profession into disrepute.

The Committee considered that Miss Meakin's criminal offending is difficult to remedy, as the matters leading to her conviction go to her character. Her acts of fraud, which were committed in the course of her professional practice, were premeditated, repeated and there were attempts by her to cover up wrongdoing. The Committee had careful regard to the detailed terms of Miss Meakin's written submissions and reflections. It was clear to the Committee that she is genuinely remorseful for her actions. However, the Committee considered that she demonstrates only limited insight into her offending. Her reflections were focused on the impact her conduct has had on her and her career. She has not reflected upon the impact her conduct had on the Informant, on other members of the dental team, on the two dental practices in question and on the Superintendent Pharmacist and supplier. She has not reflected upon how she used her position as a registered dental professional to abuse the trust placed in her by other professionals and how she risked their reputation and registration through her acts of forgery. She has not reflected upon the impact her conviction has on the reputation of the profession and on public confidence in the profession.

The Committee considered that, although Miss Meakin is unlikely to forge prescriptions again, her underlying character issues have not been addressed. It would have taken serious lack of integrity and disregard for the most basic professional and ethical standards to which she was subject for Miss Meakin to have repeatedly forged prescriptions using the signature of a dentist. Her dishonesty was sophisticated, premeditated and sustained over multiple occasions. This was not an isolated incident, or one for which any clear or credible mitigating explanation has been given.

The Committee determined that there therefore remains a real risk that Miss Meakin will act dishonestly again in the future, including in relation to her professional practice. The Committee therefore finds that Miss Meakin's fitness to practise is impaired on public protection grounds.

The Committee also determined that wider public confidence in the profession and in this regulatory process would be undermined if no finding of impairment were to be made, given the seriousness of Miss Meakin's conviction.

Accordingly, the Committee determined that Miss Meakin's fitness to practise as: (i) a dental hygienist; and (ii) a dental therapist, is currently impaired by reason of her conviction.

The Committee next considered what action, if any, to take in respect of Miss Meakin's registration in the DCP register under either or both titles.

The purpose of a sanction is not to be punitive, although it may have that effect, but to protect the public and the wider public interest.

The Committee considered the aggravating and mitigating factors present in this case.

The aggravating factors include a risk of harm, dishonesty, abuse of trust, criminal conduct which was repeated and sustained, attempts to cover up wrongdoing and a lack of insight. In mitigation, the Committee recognised Miss Meakin's genuine expressions of remorse and that she otherwise has no fitness to practise history.

The Committee noted the positive testimonials which Miss Meakin put before the Committee in support of her character. The Committee also noted the comments made by the principal dentist at [REDACTED], *"Do I think that Jade still embodies the values of [REDACTED]? Yes I do. Do I think she would make an excellent member of the team? Yes I do. Would I recruit her again? No I wouldn't."*

The Committee considered sanction in ascending order of seriousness.

To conclude this case with no further action or a reprimand would be wholly inappropriate in the Committee's judgment, given the risk of repetition and the need to mark the seriousness of Miss Meakin's criminal offending.

The Committee next considered whether to direct that Miss Meakin's registration be made subject to her compliance with conditions for a period of up to 36 months, with or without a review. The Committee could not identify any conditions which could be formulated to be workable, measurable and proportionate owing to the nature of Miss Meakin's conviction, which goes to her character. Relevant conditions would only require her to comply with the most basic ethical and professional standards to which she is already subject and of which she would have fully understood at the time of her offending. This is not a case where Miss Meakin's dishonesty was isolated, spontaneous or committed under duress or out of desperation. Rather, she has demonstrated a pattern of behaviour which shows an underlying professional attitudinal problem in relation to acting honestly and in accordance with the standards of the profession. The Committee also could not be satisfied that Miss Meakin would comply with any conditions on her registration, owing to her non-attendance at the hearing. In any event, the Committee determined that a period of conditional registration would be insufficient to protect the public and to mark the seriousness of Miss Meakin's conviction, so as to maintain public confidence in the profession and in this regulatory process.

The Committee next considered whether to direct that Miss Meakin's registration be suspended for a period of 12 months, with or without a review. The GDC's submission was that suspension is the appropriate outcome in this case. However, the GDC's submission is not binding on the Committee, which must exercise its independent judgement in deciding on the appropriate sanction. The Committee agreed with Mr Sykes's submission that the factors indicated for suspension at paragraph 6.28 of the Indicative Sanctions Guidance are present in this case, save for the final factor which is: *"there is no evidence of harmful deep-seated personality or professional attitudinal problems (which might make erasure the appropriate*

order).” In the Committee’s judgement, Miss Meakin has demonstrated evidence of a harmful deep-seated professional attitudinal problem. The conduct for which she was convicted would have required a repeated and fundamental disregard for basic ethical and professional standards. The matters in this case go to Miss Meakin’s character and professional attitude and are difficult to remedy. Miss Meakin does not demonstrate sufficient remediation.

The Committee also had regard to the factors indicated for erasure at paragraph 6.34 and considered that the following factors are engaged in this case:

- serious departure(s) from the relevant professional standards;
- where a continuing risk of serious harm to patients or other persons is identified;
- the abuse of a position of trust or violation of the rights of patients...
- serious dishonesty, particularly where persistent or covered up;
- a persistent lack of insight into the seriousness of actions or their consequences.

Having regard to all the circumstances, the Committee determined that no lesser a sanction than erasure would be appropriate to protect the public and maintain public confidence in the profession. This was not an easy decision for the Committee to reach given the relatively early stage of Miss Meakin’s career; her otherwise unblemished record; the evidence of her commitment to, and passion for, the practice of dentistry and her genuine expressions of remorse. However, by repeatedly forging prescriptions, and by then attempting to cover up her actions, she demonstrated a pattern of behaviour which is fundamentally incompatible with her remaining on the DCP register under the titles of dental hygienist and dental therapist. The repeated dishonesty in this case and the abuse of her position as a registered dental professional are too serious in the Committee’s judgment for any lesser sanction to be appropriate or proportionate. A period of suspension would not be sufficient to remedy the criminal conduct for which she was convicted. Such conduct was wholly inconsistent with the standards expected of any registered dental professional. It is conduct which was fundamentally incompatible with her remaining as a registered dental professional.

Accordingly, the Committee directs that Miss Meakin’s name be erased from the DCP register under the titles of dental hygienist and dental therapist.

The Committee now invites submissions on the question of an immediate order.

The interim order on Miss Meakin’s registration is hereby revoked.

The Committee determined that it is necessary for the protection of the public and is otherwise in the public interest to order that Miss Meakin’s registration in the DCP

register under the titles of dental hygienist and dental therapist be suspended forthwith under section 36U(1) of the Dentists Act 1984. It would be inconsistent with the decision the Committee has reached not to make an immediate order.

The effect of this order is that Miss Meakin's registration in the DCP register under both titles shall be subject to an order for immediate suspension order from the time when notice of this order is served on her. Unless Miss Meakin exercises her right of appeal, her name will be erased from the DCP register under both titles on the expiry of her 28-day appeal period. Should she exercise her right of appeal this immediate order shall remain in force pending the disposal of the appeal.

That concludes the hearing.”