

Case of the 23 swimmers who tested positive for trimetazidine on January 1, 2 and 3, 2021

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INVESTIGATIVE AND ANALYTICAL ACTS CARRIED OUT BY WADA FROM THE RECEIPT OF CHINADA'S DECISION TO THE DECISION NOT TO FILE AN APPEAL (15.06.2021 – 31.07.2021)

- 1.- On June 15 2021, the Director of the Legal Department of CHINADA sent the final decision on the case. The accompanying message summarized the conclusions of the decision in favor of an environmental contamination and a waiver of the prosecution of the swimmers concerned. It was specified that the decision was provided, together with its annexes, in Mandarin, and with an English translation.
- 2.- On June 16 2021, Marissa SUNIO (Legal Affairs) contacted Olivier RABIN (Senior Director, Science and Medicine), Irene MAZZONI (Associate Director, Science and Medicine, prohibited list) and Osquel BARROSO (Associate Director, Science and Medicine, laboratories) indicating that WADA had received the decision and asking if CHINADA had contacted them about the case. Checks were carried out to verify that the case had been reported into the ADAMS database. Julien SIEVEKING (Director of Legal Affairs) recalled that information had been sent to them at the beginning of April, suggesting that the case would keep them busy in the following weeks. Olivier RABIN confirmed that he had found the information from April (i.e. an email from Marissa SUNIO " FYI " dated April 27 2021).
- 3.- On 16 June 2021, Olivier NIGGLI (Director General) had a telephone conversation with the Chinese Vice-Minister of Sport, a member of WADA's Foundation Board. This conversation, documented in writing, concerned questions relating to the affiliation of the accredited laboratory in Beijing, with a view to the Beijing Winter Olympics in January-February 2022. The case of the 23 swimmers who tested positive for TMZ was raised during this discussion, in which Olivier RABIN also participated. The Chinese Vice Minister said that the Chinese are willing to cooperate and offered to answer any questions to be asked, through CHINADA.
- 4.- Also on 16 June 2021, Marissa SUNIO summarized the main elements of the case.
- 5.- On 17 June 2021, Marissa SUNIO's summary was sent to Ross WENZEL, a lawyer who worked at the time at the Kellerhals-Carrard law firm before joining WADA in 2022. The summary was also circulated to the various services and departments concerned, attaching the decision.
- 6.- On 17 June 2021, Ross WENZEL told Marissa SUNIO that the entire file should be requested quickly, and that WADA and FINA should coordinate during the appeal period.
- 7.- Also on June 17, 2021, Julien SIEVEKING sent Olivier NIGGLI and Olivier RABIN the summary prepared the previous day by Marissa SUNIO. He noted that WADA has only known that the 23 swimmers concerned were on the " *long list* " for the Tokyo Olympics since 8 June. He also reported contacts with Brent NOWICKI, who had recently become Director General of FINA. He had also sent him a copy of the decision on June 17, 2021. Both agreed that WADA and FINA should coordinate on the case to file any appeals.

8.- From 18 June 2021, Olivier RABIN contacted the pharmaceutical company behind TMZ in order to obtain information, mainly on the pharmacokinetics of the substance (see sections 18, 25, 26 and 30 below).

9.- On 21 June 2021, Olivier RABIN contacted Irene MAZZONI by telephone to discuss the case.

10.- On 21 June 2021, Olivier RABIN wrote the following to Julien SIEVEKING: "*... I think that we will have to move fairly quickly on this Trimetazidine/China issue. If we decide to go into detail and review all the elements, we will have to rely on 2 or 3 external experts.*" Coordination with FINA was again mentioned, with a division of labour being suggested.

11.- Also on 21 June 2021, Katherine BROWN, of the Legal Affairs Department and Results Management Coordinator, asked the Director of the Legal Department of CHINADA to provide the entire case file.

12.- On the same day, Justin LESSARD (FINA Legal) submitted the same request for FINA and informed WADA of that request.

13.- On 23 June 2021, the director of the legal department of CHINADA informed Katherine BROWN that the file had been made available on the platform provided for this purpose.

14.- On 25 June 2021, Marissa SUNIO informed the various WADA services and departments concerned that the complete (Chinese) file was now available to them on the Agency's Sharefile. The same information was given to the law firm Kellerhals-Carrard.

15.- On the same day, Cyril TROUSSARD (Associate Director, Legal Affairs, Results Management) asked Marissa SUNIO for a brief update on the case, for the attention of Olivier NIGGLI and Julien SIEVEKING.

16.- On 26 June 2021, the legal departments of FINA and WADA announced to each other that they had received the complete file for coordination purposes.

17.- On 28 and 29 June 2021, Olivier RABIN set out to find experts in environmental toxicology and human exposure to xenobiotics, as well as in human excretion.

18.- On the same day, Olivier RABIN met with scientists from the pharmaceutical company behind TMZ, on a series of points of a technical nature related to the case (cf. ch. 8, above and 25, 26 and 30 below).

19.- On 2 July 2021, Olivier RABIN circulated to the various persons involved for WADA a document listing various issues relating to the case, in several areas.

20.- On 5 and 6 July 2021, Olivier RABIN and Marissa SUNIO had contacts regarding the state of the case from which the investigator retained the following elements:

- Since 2015, there had only been one case of a Chinese swimmer testing positive for TMZ, in 2017;
- A table incorporating additional information on the tests undergone by the swimmers and the samples was in the process of being established;
- Information on the reviews carried out by FINA was expected;
- The question of the successive deadlines for appealing by FINA first (14 July?) and then by WADA (4 August?) was raised.

21.- On 8 July 2021, through one of its lawyers, the law firm Kellerhals-Carrard informed WADA of the results of the examination of the file that he had carried out with Ross WENZEL, who was working at the time in the same firm before joining WADA in 2022. The lawyer explained that he was of the opinion that the case should not be appealed, as the chances of success (*merits*) were relatively low. The thesis of environmental contamination seemed realistic to them, and other theories, either those of intentional doping or contamination by the use of food supplements, seemed difficult to establish. The opinion was supported by various considerations derived from the Chinese case file. In summary, the lawyer stated that "*there is clear evidence of environmental contamination and no clear positive factors in favor of a different explanation*".

22.- On the same day, Olivier RABIN discussed the case, as part of an expert appraisal of environmental contamination, with two scientists specializing in the subject from the School of Public Health of the University of Montreal.

23.- On 9 July 2021, Julien SIEVEKING circulated the opinion of the Kellerhals-Carrard lawyer internally, specifying that 12 of the 23 swimmers were now on the short list for Tokyo and confirming the appeal deadlines of July 14 for FINA and August 4 for WADA.

24.- Between 9 and 12 July 2021, Olivier RABIN contacted Jordi SEGURA. The latter, former director of the Barcelona Doping Analysis Laboratory and an experienced scientist in the field of Anti-Doping, was a member of the FINA Anti-Doping Commission in the summer of 2021.

25.- On 13 July 2021, Olivier RABIN disseminated information within WADA indicating that he had had contact with Jordi SEGURA the previous day.

The two had talked, Olivier RABIN informing Jordi SEGURA that WADA had received scientific information from the original manufacturer of TMZ, and would probably receive more, and that this information could prove very useful in the management of this case (see ch. 8 and 18 above and 26 and 30 below). According to Olivier RABIN, Prof. SEGURA considered the hypothesis of contamination to be the most likely. He had informed FINA's lawyer that, in his opinion, it was indeed more likely that the positive tests for TMZ were the result of contamination than the other way around. Without being able to say exactly how much weight FINA had finally given to Prof. Segura's opinion in its decision-making process, Olivier Rabin thought that it had certainly counted. (*Editor's note: heard by the Investigator, Brent NOWICKI confirmed that the opinion of the expert SEGURA had been a decisive element in FINA's decision not to pursue the appeal, despite the statement of appeal filed to protect the deadline (see ch.28 below).*)

26.- Olivier RABIN also indicated, in his dissemination of information within WADA, that he had had contacts, by videoconference, with experts in the field of pharmacology of the company producing the TMZ (see sections 8, 18 and 25 above and 30 below). Before being able to report on this, however, it was necessary to wait for the green light from the company's lawyers before the latter could send WADA the information and calculations contained in a document that served as a basis for the conference. Olivier RABIN concluded by indicating his intention to carry out further excretion calculations.

27.- Following internal exchanges between the services concerned, Marissa SUNIO, on 14 July 2021, requested additional Intelligence from CHINADA (cf. Ch. 29 below).

28.- On 15 July 2021, Justin LESSARD informed WADA that FINA had filed a "*Statement of appeal*" against CHINADA's decision of 15 June 2021, with the aim of acting before the deadline expired (14 July 2021). The email explains that the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) had been asked

not to notify the appeal until it was confirmed by FINA, which was due to take place on 21 July 2021. FINA had not informed CHINADA and would only do so after its analysis and final decision on an appeal. The email to WADA further stated that the call was highly confidential, making it clear that FINA did not want to disrupt the swimmers concerned in their preparation for the Tokyo Olympic Games. FINA wanted WADA to inform it of its own intentions, if possible before 21 July.

It is apparent from the documents that, on 21 July 2021, FINA withdrew its appeal.

29.- On 19 July 2021, CHINADA provided clarifications on certain points, thus following up on a request from Marissa SUNIO of 14 July 2021 (para. 25 above). The answers given concerned:

- two food supplements that had not been analyzed at first and which were analyzed afterwards, the analysis revealing that they did not contain TMZ;
- the very large number of searches undertaken so far in vain by the public authorities to determine the origin of environmental contamination;
- investigations into the TMZ manufacturing plant closest to the hotel, which was more than 200 km away, as the traces of TMZ found in the vicinity of that plant could not be correlated with the case of the swimmers;
- the difficulty of the searches, given the time that has elapsed, but which nevertheless continued;
- the unsuccessful investigations into a hotel staff member who may have taken TMZ and may have been the source of the contamination;
- details of the concentration of TMZ detected during checks of the hotel's kitchens and seasoning containers & others, which ranged from 0.03 ng/mL to 0.2 ng/mL.

30.- On 20 July 2021, Olivier RABIN received authorization to use, on a confidential basis, the PowerPoint-type presentation answering various questions (see ch. 8, 18, 25 and 26 above). He also requested and obtained additional information from the pharmaceutical company behind TMZ. He also circulated the information internally. On the basis of this analysis, which provided information on the possible relationship between the doses found in swimmers, downstream, and the ingestion of the substance, upstream, Olivier RABIN refrained from soliciting other scientific experts, but to make his own calculations on the specific case on the basis of the scientific information obtained.

31.- On 21 July 2021, Olivier RABIN and Irene MAZZONI continued their exchanges, continuing to question the contamination scenario by comparing the doses resulting from the tests with the figures contained in the document concerning the pharmacokinetics drawn up by the pharmaceutical company at the origin of the TMZ.

32.- On 28 July 2021, at the initiative of Olivier RABIN, questions were again asked to CHINADA by Marissa SUNIO about the precise location of the traces of TMZ discovered in the carts where the containers of salt, spices, seasoning, etc. were kept. The answers given the next day gave few details. As far as we understand, no trace of TMZ was found inside the containers, nor in the food itself, CHINADA pointing out more than two months had passed and that the containers had necessarily been emptied and refilled.

33.- On July 30, 2021, Olivier RABIN began by noting that the latest information and answers given by CHINADA did not add much to what they already knew. Uncertainties about the source of contamination and the lack of TMZ measurements in a foodstuff made it almost impossible to

design a realistic scenario. The results of the calculations he had attempted to perform in order to determine how much exposure to TMZ would have been required to reach 1 to 1.7 ng/mL¹ at excretion resulted only in an estimation of “a few micrograms”, which was not sufficiently precise to confirm or exclude contamination. Olivier Rabin persisted in finding that "a few micrograms" was high for contamination and was surprised that the Chinese had not found, among the kitchen or hotel staff, a person taking TMZ. As he was unable to exclude the contamination scenario in a solidly substantiated manner, he saw no other solution than to accept it, even if he continued to have doubts about the reality of contamination as described by the Chinese authorities. Olivier RABIN reserved the position of Irène MAZZONI.

34.- Finally, on 31 July 2021, Irene MAZZONI, apologizing for the lateness of her response, agreed with Olivier RABIN's analysis, while expressing her difficulty in believing in the contamination due to the minimal doses found in the kitchen, which is moreover outside the food, two months after the competitions, without the origin of TMZ being identified; she nevertheless accepted that WADA did not have a solid argument to affirm that it was not contamination.

35.- Also on 31 July 2021, Julien SIEVEKING announced to the Legal and Science and Medicine departments that the case was therefore closed.

36.- On 4 August 2021, the last day of WADA's deadline to file an appeal, the closure of the case was introduced into the system by Marissa SUNIO and Katherine BROWN.

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¹ Following publication of this annex on 9 July 2024, a material typographical error was noted in point 33 above (µg vs. ng), which has now been corrected.