

For discussion
on 13 November 2000

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Meeting on 13 November 2000**

Introduction of Chinese Medicine in the Public Health Care System

Purpose

This paper outlines the latest developments in the regulation of Chinese medicine and the arrangements for the introduction of Chinese medicine in the public health care system.

Background

2. The Chinese Medicine Ordinance (the Ordinance), which provides a statutory regulatory framework to control the practice, use, trading and manufacture of Chinese medicine, was enacted by the Legislative Council in July 1999. The Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMC) was established in September 1999 to develop and implement appropriate control measures in relation to Chinese medicine.

Progress

3. The Chinese Medicine Council made the Chinese Medicine Practitioners (Registration) Regulation and the Chinese Medicine Practitioners (Discipline) Regulation in May 2000 to provide for the setting up of a registration system for Chinese medicine practitioners (CMP). In addition to the above, the Chinese Medicine Practitioners (Fees) Regulation was enacted to set out the level of fees payable for registration as CMP and other related purposes. The above three regulations came into operation on 16 August 2000.

Registration of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

4. The CMC has commenced the exercise to register practising Chinese medicine practitioners under the transitional arrangements provided in the Ordinance. Details of the transitional arrangements are set out at the Annex. CMPs can submit their applications for registration from 16 August to 30 December 2000.

5. By the end of October 2000, the CMC had received over 2 600 applications for registration. The CMC Secretariat interviews the applicants and contact relevant organizations (such as Chinese medicine training institutions) to verify information received. Following this verification procedure, the applications will be considered by the Registration Committee of the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board, and the vetted applications will then be submitted to the Board for approval. We expect that the names of the first batch of registered CMP will be promulgated in early 2001. All bona fide practising practitioners who do not qualify under the stipulated criteria for direct registration will be classified as “listed Chinese medicine practitioners” and allowed to continue their practice. Subject to the progress of processing the applications, the CMC will make arrangements for Registration Assessment and Licensing Examination to be held next year, so as to assess applicants who are not eligible for direct registration.

6. In parallel, the CMC has prepared a Code of Practice to lay down guidelines on professional conduct for listed and registered CMP, covering areas such as professional ethics, prescription requirements, scope of practice and promotion of individual practice.

Education on Chinese Medicine in Hong Kong

7. Apart from the courses organised by private Chinese medical institutes and CMP associations, three local universities also offer full-time and part-time degree and diploma programmes on Chinese medicine. The Hong Kong Baptist University and the Chinese University of Hong Kong provide full-time bachelor’s degree programmes while the University of Hong Kong offers part-time diploma and degree courses. The first batch of students of the full time degree programmes will graduate in 2003. In addition, the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education under the Vocational Training Council also organises full-time and part-time diploma courses on Chinese medicine dispensing and manufacturing.

Control of Chinese Medicines

8. Meanwhile, the CMC is in the process of preparing subsidiary legislation for the control of Chinese medicines. The regulation will contain detailed provisions for the licensing of retailers and wholesalers of Chinese herbal medicines, licensing of wholesalers and manufacturers of proprietary Chinese medicines, and registration of individual proprietary Chinese medicines. According to the draft regulation, all proprietary Chinese medicines on sale in

Hong Kong must be registered individually with the Chinese Medicines Board under the CMC. We expect to introduce the subsidiary legislation into the Legislative Council within the current legislative year.

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9. At present, most CMPs are engaged in private practice while some work at Chinese medicine clinics run by non-governmental organisations. Tung Wah Hospital, Kwong Wah Hospital, Pok Oi Hospital and Yan Chai Hospital provide Chinese medicine services in their out-patient departments.

10. Following the registration of CMP, we intend to provide out-patient Chinese medicine services in the public sector. We are now considering the modes of provision with a view to introducing pilot services in 2001-02. We shall report and consult Members as soon as we have formulated detailed proposals.

Health and Welfare Bureau
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**Details of the transitional arrangements
for registration of Chinese medicine practitioners**

1. Chinese medicine practitioners who satisfy the Practitioners Board that they have continuously been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong for 15 years or more immediately preceding 3 January 2000 will be exempted from the Licensing Examination and registration assessment. They may be registered provided they also satisfy the other general registration requirements.
2. Chinese medicine practitioners who satisfy the Practitioners Board that they have continuously been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong for ten years or more but less than 15 years immediately preceding 3 January 2000 and that they hold acceptable academic qualification will be exempted from the Licensing Examination as well as the registration assessment and may be registered provided they also satisfy the other general registration requirements.
3. Chinese medicine practitioners who satisfy the Practitioners Board that they have continuously been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong for ten years or more but less than 15 years immediately preceding 3 January 2000 but do not hold acceptable academic qualification will be subject to a registration assessment by the Practitioners Board. If they pass the registration assessment, they will be exempted from the Licensing Examination. They may then be registered provided they also satisfy the other general registration requirements.
4. Chinese medicine practitioners who satisfy the Practitioners Board that they have continuously been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong for less than ten years immediately preceding 3 January 2000 and that they hold acceptable academic qualification will be subject to a registration assessment. If they pass the registration assessment, they will be exempted from the Licensing Examination. They may then be registered provided they also satisfy the other general registration requirements.

5. Chinese medicine practitioners who have continuously been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong for less than ten years immediately preceding 3 January 2000 and who do not hold any acceptable academic qualification will have to pass the Licensing Examination and satisfy the other general registration requirements in order to be registered.

6. Those practising Chinese medicine practitioners who are required to undergo a registration assessment or to take the Licensing Examination will be permitted to continue to practise Chinese medicine provisionally in accordance with section 90 of the Ordinance. They will need to meet the registration standard and be registered before a cut-off date to be specified and promulgated by the Secretary for Health and Welfare by notice in the Gazette.