

Information Paper
25 February 2005

LegCo Health Panel

Registration of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

Objective

This paper is to report to members on the development of registration of Chinese medicine practitioners (the “CMPs”) in Hong Kong.

Background

2. The Chinese Medicine Ordinance was enacted by the Legislative Council in 1999. The Ordinance stipulates the details of the registration system of CMPs, which includes the transitional and long-term registration arrangements, discipline system, and the requirement for continuing education, etc.

3. The Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (the “Council”) is a statutory body and was established under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance in September 1999. The Council is responsible for maintaining the professionalism of CMPs as well as the standard of practice and conduct of Chinese medicines traders, ensuring the proper use of traditional Chinese medicines by the profession, and regulating the safety, efficacy and quality of proprietary Chinese medicines. The Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (the “Practitioners Board”) and the Chinese Medicines Board under the Council are responsible for the above matters.

Registration System of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

4. The registration system of CMPs is an important topic in drafting the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. The Legislative Council had thorough discussion and the Administration had consulted different sectors of the community and the CMP profession on the registration system. The Administration understood that there were many practising CMPs who had been contributing greatly to the health of members of the public. It

therefore suggested providing transitional arrangements under the registration system of CMPs to enable these practising CMPs to continue to practice Chinese medicine and serve the community.

5. Besides, the Administration understood that the practising experience and academic qualifications of the practising CMPs were varied. Assessment system and registration examination system were therefore formulated to assess the standard of practising CMPs. In accordance with the assessments of their practising experience and academic qualifications, those practising CMPs who satisfied the requirements were allowed to directly apply for registration as registered CMPs. For those who could not obtain the registration qualification may temporarily continue to practice, and depending on individual practising experience and academic qualifications, they could get the registration status through Registration Assessment or Licensing Examination. It is the long-term objective of the Administration that all practising CMPs in Hong Kong are registered CMPs, such that the provision of Chinese medicine service in Hong Kong is up to the professional standard.

6. The Practitioners Board announced a total of 7 707 listed CMPs in December 2001. All listed CMPs fulfilled the requirements under the transitional arrangement for registration of CMPs.

7. Under sections 93 to 95 of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, the Practitioners Board will assess the practising experience, knowledge, qualifications and skills of the listed Chinese medicine practitioners based on the information submitted by them with the applications, so as to determine which of the following categories they fall into for the purpose of registration:

Category One

Applicants, who have been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong continuously for not less than 15 years immediately before 3 January 2000, shall be exempted from the Licensing Examination and Registration Assessment, and can apply to be registered Chinese medicine practitioners directly.

Category Two

Applicants, who have been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong continuously for less than 15 years but NOT less than 10 years immediately before 3 January 2000 and have obtained academic qualifications acceptable to the Practitioners Board, shall be exempted from the Licensing Examination and Registration Assessment, and can apply to be registered Chinese medicine practitioners directly.

Category Three

Applicants, who have been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong continuously for less than 15 years but NOT less than 10 years immediately before 3 January 2000 and have NOT obtained academic qualifications acceptable to the Practitioners Board, shall pass the Registration Assessment conducted by the Practitioners Board before they are qualified to apply for registration. Applicants who fail the Registration Assessment have to undertake the Licensing Examination.

Category Four

Applicants, who have been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong continuously for less than 10 years immediately before 3 January 2000 and have obtained academic qualifications acceptable to the Practitioners Board, shall pass the Registration Assessment conducted by the Practitioners Board before they are qualified to apply for registration. Applicants who fail the Registration Assessment have to undertake the Licensing Examination.

Category Five

Applicants, who have been practising Chinese medicine in Hong Kong continuously for less than 10 years immediately before 3 January 2000, and have NOT obtained academic qualifications acceptable to the Practitioners Board, shall pass the Licensing Examination before they are qualified to apply for registration.

8. In brief, those CMPs with not less than 15 years of practising experience, or with not less than 10 years of practising experience and recognized academic qualifications, could get registration without any examination or assessment; those CMPs with at least 10 years and not more than 15 years of practising experience or having recognized academic qualifications could get registration through Registration Assessment; and

the remaining persons have to get registration through the Licensing Examination.

9. The Practitioners Board completed the assessment of the practising experience and academic qualifications of the concerned listed CMPs in August 2002. Among the assessed listed CMPs, 2 543 persons could apply for direct registration, 2 515 persons have to pass the Registration Assessment, and 2 619 persons have to attend the Licensing Examination. In November 2002, the Council announced the first batch of 2 384 registered CMPs in the gazette.

10. The Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board conducted two rounds of Registration Assessment during January to February and October in 2003. More than 2 200 Listed Chinese Medicine Practitioners (LCMPs) participated in the assessment, with an overall passing rate of 83%.

11. The Registration Assessment was designed to test the candidates' basic professional knowledge and skills of Chinese medicine, in order to assess whether they have achieved the professional standard for practising Chinese medicine. The scope of assessment includes Basic Theories of Chinese Medicine, Diagnostics of Chinese Medicine, Chinese Materia Medica, Chinese Medicinal Formulary, Internal Medicine of Chinese Medicine, External Medicine of Chinese Medicine, Gynaecology of Chinese Medicine, Paediatrics of Chinese Medicine, Orthopaedics and Traumatology of Chinese Medicine, and Acupuncture and Moxibustion. The assessment was conducted in the form of an interview. Each candidate was required to analyze two cases, including a complete one and an incomplete one, and each case contains three groups of questions. Complete cases cover common diseases of Internal Medicine, External Medicine, Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Orthopaedics and Traumatology, as well as Acupuncture and Moxibustion of Chinese Medicine. The purpose is to test candidates' knowledge of Chinese Medicine Basic Theories, Diagnostics, Chinese Materia Medica, Medicinal Formulary, etc., and the ability to apply them in clinical practice. Incomplete cases cover common diseases relating to the candidate's main stream of practice as indicated in the application form for LCMP. The purpose is to test the candidate's overall analytical ability on disease information, and his/her clinical knowledge and skills.

12. The first Chinese Medicine Practitioners Licensing Examination was conducted in June to August 2003. Persons eligible for taking the examination include:

- (a) LCMPs who are required to undertake the Licensing Examination under the transitional arrangement for registration of CMPs.
- (b) Persons holding an undergraduate degree in Chinese medicine recognized by the Practitioners Board or equivalent (including graduates of Chinese medicine undergraduate courses of the Baptist University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong, and 27 Chinese medicine institutes in the Mainland fulfilling the basic requirements and recognized by the Practitioners Board. The list of recognized Chinese medicine institutes in the Mainland is at Annex 1).

13. To ensure the professional standard of CMPs, registered CMPs should be able to master the fundamental and clinical skills of Chinese medicine practice. Given that traditional Chinese medicine has its own established system, the licensing examination should be directed at a comprehensive professional assessment of the candidates' fundamental knowledge of Chinese medicine. The examination should cover both fundamental and clinical subjects of general Chinese medicine. It should also be noted that traditional Chinese medicine has developed various kinds of diagnostic and treatment methods, which are however all rooted in the basic theories of Chinese medicine. For application of any diagnostic and treatment method of Chinese medicine, appropriate clinical assessment is possible only with the command of fundamental knowledge of the basic theories of Chinese medicine. In developing the scope of examination, the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board has taken reference from other medical professions, and the mode and scope of CMP examination in the Mainland, with due regard to the circumstances in Hong Kong. There are two parts for the licensing examination, including a Part I written examination and a Part II clinical examination. The scope of examination includes the basic and clinical subjects of general practice in Chinese medicine, basic knowledge of modern medicine, and other contents related

to the health care system in Hong Kong and the regulatory systems for Chinese medicine. Chinese Medicine Ordinance regulates the practice of general practice, acupuncture and bone-setting in Chinese medicine. There is no provision for separate registration for specialty. Syllabus of the Licensing Examination is at Annex 2.

14. More than 1 400 candidates participated in the written examination conducted on 15th and 18th June 2003, including 1 319 LCMPs and 89 non-LCMPs, with an overall passing rate of 47%. The candidates who passed the Part I written examination were qualified for undertaking the Part II clinical examination. The Part II clinical examination was conducted from September to October 2003, with 650 candidates and a passing rate of 82%. The Practitioners Board conducted the written examination of 2004 Chinese Medicine Practitioners Licensing Examination on 15th and 17th June 2004, and the Part II clinical examination from end of July to August. 605 candidates, including 510 LCMPs, undertook the written examination with a passing rate of 27%. 251 candidates, including 158 LCMPs, undertook the clinical examination with a passing rate of 75%.

15. As of December 2004, there are about 3 000 listed CMPs, 55 CMPs with limited registrations and about 5 000 registered CMPs in Hong Kong. Among the some 5 000 registered CMPs, 2 460 obtained registration by direct registration, 1 839 through Registration Assessment, 689 through Licensing Examination (539 of them were listed CMPs).

16. The Council will continue to hold at least one round of CMP Licensing Examination each year according to the actual situation. The long-term objective of the Administration is to require all practising CMPs in Hong Kong to be registered CMPs as a means to ensure the professional standard of the trade as a whole. Nevertheless, in view of the unique background of CMPs stemming from the development of the trade in Hong Kong and their long contributions to medical services, the Administration considers it pragmatic in the interests of the actual social needs to allow listed CMPs to continue with their practice as an interim measure.

Continuing Education in Chinese Medicine (CME)

17. The requirement for continuing education in Chinese medicine is an integral component in the registration system of CMPs. Under sections 76 and 82 of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, registered CMPs can renew their practising certificates only if they fulfill the requirements of continuing education in Chinese medicine as set out by the Practitioners Board.

18. Subsequent to comprehensive study and extensive consultation with the profession of Chinese medicine, the Practitioners Board has formulated the system and requirements of CME for registered CMPs. Apart from those covered by the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Licensing Examination, the scope of CME also includes relevant areas such as modernization of Chinese medicine and the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, etc. The practising certificates of registered CMPs shall normally be renewed every three years. Registered CMPs should participate in CME activities and acquire not less than 60 CME points within each (three-year) cycle.

19. The Practitioners Board has announced the lists of accredited “CME Administrators” and “CME Programme Providers” on 17 January 2005 and has decided to implement the CME System with effect from 28 February 2005.

20. Members are requested to discuss the contents of the paper.

Department of Health
February 2005

Name of mainland institutes which award undergraduate degree in Chinese medicine recognized by the Practitioners Board

1. Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
2. Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
3. Beijing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
4. Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
5. Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
6. Heilongjiang University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
7. Guangzhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
8. Shanxi College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
9. Tianjin College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
10. College of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pharmacy of the Beijing Union University
11. Gansu College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
12. Jiangxi College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
13. Anhui College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
14. College of Traditional Chinese Medicine of the Hebei Medical University
15. Henan College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
16. Changchun College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
17. Shanxi College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
18. Zhejiang College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
19. Hubei College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
20. Hunan College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
21. Yunnan College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
22. Guiyang College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
23. Fujian College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
24. College of Traditional Chinese Medicine of the Xinjiang Medical University
25. Guangxi College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
26. Liaoning College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
27. Beijing College of Acupuncture – Moxibustion and Orthopaedics - Traumatology

Syllabus of Licensing Examination

1. Hong Kong Health Care System and Regulatory System for Chinese Medicine Practitioners
2. Fundamentals of Modern Medicine
3. History of Chinese Medicine & School of Thoughts of Chinese Medicine
4. Archaic Chinese Medical Literature
5. Basic Theories of Chinese Medicine
6. Diagnostics of Chinese Medicine
7. Chinese Materia Medica
8. Chinese Medicinal Formulary
9. Canon of Chinese medicine
10. Treatise on Exogenous Febrile Diseases
11. Golden Chest
12. Science of Seasonal Febrile Diseases
13. Internal Medicine of Chinese Medicine
14. External Medicine of Chinese Medicine
15. Gynaecology of Chinese Medicine
16. Paediatrics of Chinese Medicine
17. Ophthalmology and Otorhinolaryngology of Chinese medicine
18. Orthopaedics and Traumatology of Chinese Medicine
19. Acupuncture and Moxibustion
20. Life Cultivation and Health Care of Chinese Medicine