

**For discussion on
14 May 2007**

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Registration of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

Purpose

Matters regarding the registration of Chinese Medicine Practitioners (“CMPs”) were discussed by the Panel on Health Services (“the Panel”) at the meeting on 13 November 2006. This paper updates Members on the latest developments.

Transitional Arrangement for the Registration of CMPs

2. The registration system for CMPs was an important issue in the drafting of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. The Legislative Council had thoroughly discussed the system and the Administration had consulted different sectors of the community and the Chinese medicine profession. The registration system for CMPs aims to ensure the professional standard of CMPs and protect the health and well-being of patients. Under this system, any person who wishes to apply for registration as a registered CMP must first complete a recognised undergraduate degree training course and pass the CMP Licensing Examination.

3. When implementing the registration system for CMPs, the Administration was aware that there were then quite a number of practising CMPs. It therefore suggested making transitional arrangements for these practising CMPs to continue their practice as listed CMPs. Based on their practising experience and academic qualifications, these listed CMPs were allowed to get registration through three avenues of the transitional arrangement provided for under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. The three avenues include (i) direct registration; (ii) undergoing the Registration Assessment; and (iii)

undergoing the Licensing Examination. The details are set out in Annex 1.

4. The Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (“Practitioners Board”) announced a total of 7 707 listed CMPs in December 2001. After that, it proceeded to assess the practising experience and qualifications of listed CMPs so as to determine the avenues through which they could apply for registration. The Practitioners Board completed the assessment in August 2002. Of those listed CMPs, 2 543 persons could apply for direct registration, 2 515 persons could undergo the Registration Assessment, and 2 619 persons were required to sit the Licensing Examination. The Practitioners Board completed the Registration Assessment in October 2003. More than 2 200 listed CMPs took the assessment, with an overall passing rate of 83%.

5. As at April 2007, there were 5 254 registered CMPs, 2 890 listed CMPs and 71 CMPs with limited registration (CMPs engaged in clinical teaching or research in an educational or scientific research institution) in Hong Kong.

Eligibility for Undertaking the CMP Licensing Examination

6. According to the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, persons eligible for undertaking the CMP Licensing Examination include-

- (i) listed CMPs; or
- (ii) persons having satisfactorily completed such undergraduate degree course of training in Chinese medicine practice or its equivalent as is approved by the Practitioners Board.

7. To ensure that Chinese medicine degree courses reach the requirements and levels of those courses recognised by the Practitioners Board, the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (“the Council”) established the Committee on Assessment of Chinese Medicine Degree Courses (“the Committee”) under the Practitioners Board in June 2001. The Committee is responsible for assessing the standards of undergraduate degree courses in Chinese medicine and to make recommendations to the Practitioners Board. In December 2002, the

Practitioners Board announced, for the first time, the basic requirements for recognised courses, which include-

- (i) such course must be a full-time undergraduate degree course with duration of not less than five years, including a clinical training of not less than 30 weeks; or its equivalent;
- (ii) such course must include the ten compulsory subjects on Chinese medicine designated by the Practitioners Board;
- (iii) no part of such course is conducted by means of distance learning (such as correspondence course or internet training programme); and
- (iv) the institute offering such course fulfils the basic requirements for a university and for clinical teaching.

8. The practice of CMPs is closely related to the health of the public. Therefore, the Practitioners Board considers that for students to complete satisfactorily an undergraduate degree course in Chinese medicine, they should have received comprehensive and fundamental university education as well as undergone full-time learning. Students should also be provided with adequate opportunity to practise continuously in order to complete all the relevant clinical training and experiments. A full-time on campus learning environment is an important component of quality teaching. To maintain the professional standard and status of CMPs, and with regard to the corresponding licensing requirements for other healthcare professions (e.g. medical practitioners and dentists), the Practitioners Board considers that the full-time mode of education should be adopted for the recognised courses for the CMP Licensing Examination.

9. The Practitioners Board at present recognizes the five-year full-time undergraduate degree courses in Chinese medicine offered by 31 Chinese medicine institutes and universities (including the Hong Kong Baptist University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong and the 28 Mainland tertiary institutes listed in Annex 2). Those courses have been assessed by the Committee or are recommended by the state authority entrusted by the Practitioners Board.

10. At the meeting in November 2006, the Panel discussed the participation of students of part-time degree courses in Chinese medicine in the CMP Licensing Examination. As mentioned above, the Practitioners Board considers that the full-time mode of education should be adopted for the recognised courses for the CMP Licensing Examination.

11. In view of the historical circumstances of Chinese medicine education in Hong Kong universities, the Practitioners Board assessed the part-time degree courses in Chinese medicine offered by the University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Baptist University since 2000 and 1998. After careful consideration, the Practitioners Board decided that students enrolled in the above courses in or before 2002 could sit the Licensing Examination when they had satisfactorily completed the courses. However, this was an exceptional and one-off arrangement and should not be extended to other part-time degree courses in Chinese medicine.

12. Since the announcement of the basic requirements for recognition of courses in December 2002, the Practitioners Board has rejected three part-time undergraduate courses in Chinese medicine with the degrees conferred by non-local universities and jointly run by local universities or education institutes. They include-

- (i) Bachelor of Health Science(Chinese Medicine) Programme jointly organised by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University and the Hong Kong Baptist University;
- (ii) part-time undergraduate degree course in Chinese Medicine offered by the University of Xiamen and the Li Ka Shing Institute of Professional and Continuing Education, the Open University of Hong Kong; and
- (iii) part-time degree course in Chinese Medicine offered by Jinan University and the Hong Kong College of Technology.

13. Since the conduct of the first CMP Licensing Examination in 2003, the Practitioners Board has rejected the applications of 20 graduates of part-time non-local undergraduate degree courses in Chinese medicine for sitting the Licensing Examination. These applicants concerned are

graduates of 11 education institutions in the Mainland.

14. A student of the part-time degree course in Chinese medicine jointly offered by Jinan University and the Hong Kong College of Technology applied for judicial review of the decision of the Practitioners Board not to approve the course concerned. However, the judicial review and the appeal were dismissed in June 2006 and March 2007 respectively. Noting that the Practitioners Board has all along been rejecting part-time undergraduate degree courses in Chinese medicine jointly run by non-local universities and local education institutes, the Court of Appeal of the High Court considered that it was justified for the Practitioners Board not to approve part-time degree courses in Chinese medicine offered by non-local universities and it could not be faulted for making a limited exception only in respect of universities in Hong Kong.

Content and Format of the CMP Licensing Examination

15. Since 2003, the Practitioners Board conducts the written examination and the clinical examination of the Licensing Examination respectively in June and August each year. In developing the scope of the examination, the Practitioners Board has taken reference from the mode and scope of examinations of other medical professions in Hong Kong and CMPs in the Mainland. To ensure the professional standard of CMPs, the Practitioners Board considers that registered CMPs should be able to master the fundamental and clinical skills of Chinese medicine practice. As the traditional Chinese medicine system is an integrated whole, the Licensing Examination should be directed at a comprehensive professional assessment of the candidates' fundamental knowledge of Chinese medicine. The examination includes the basic and clinical subjects of general practice in Chinese medicine and other subjects related to the health care system in Hong Kong, the regulatory systems for Chinese medicine, and the rights and liability of CMPs etc, so as to meet the needs of the development of modern Chinese medicine.

16. The Licensing Examination is divided into two parts, including Part I written examination and Part II clinical examination. The written examination includes a Paper 1 and a Paper 2, each containing 150 multiple-choice questions. A pass in the written examination is valid for

five years. A candidate has to pass the written examination in order to be qualified to take the clinical examination. The clinical examination is conducted in the form of an interview. It mainly covers internal medicine, external medicine, gynaecology, paediatrics, orthopaedics and traumatology, and acupuncture and moxibustion.

Listed CMPs to Get Registration

17. The Administration appreciates that some practising listed CMPs may not be familiar with the examination as a mode of assessment. The Department of Health has therefore organised training courses on examination skills for listed CMPs annually since 2003 to brief candidates on the scope, mode, procedures of the examination and answering techniques, with a view to familiarising them with the format of the Licensing Examination and helping them better demonstrate their mastery of Chinese medicine in the examination.

18. For listed CMPs without sufficient basic training in Chinese medicine, the transitional arrangement is intended to let them have ample time for further study and eventually get registration through the avenues under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. Some local Chinese medicine organisations have offered courses designed according to the circumstances and the needs of listed CMPs to equip them with the necessary Chinese medicine knowledge for preparing for the examination. Moreover, listed CMP organisation has successfully applied for funds from Professional Services Development Assistance Scheme to organise professional development programmes.

19. To encourage listed CMPs to take part in the Licensing Examination to obtain registration status but without compromising the professional standard in Chinese medicine practice, the Practitioners Board decided in August 2006 to revise the format and arrangement of the Licensing Examination. Changes include-

- (i) allowing the candidates to retain a pass in any one paper of the written examination taken in or after 2007 for three years and to choose to re-sit the other paper;
- (ii) simplifying the question form of all multiple-choice

questions in the written examination; and

(iii) re-grouping the 20 subjects of the written examination into 13 subjects (details are set out in Annex 3).

20. Previously, candidates were required to analyse and answer questions about two cases in the Clinical Examination, including a case with complete clinical details (“complete case”) and a case with incomplete clinical details (“incomplete case”). Some Chinese medicine organisations proposed to allow candidates to choose clinical cases. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau referred the proposal to the Council in end 2006. After careful deliberation, the Practitioners Board decided to accept the proposal of allowing candidates to choose clinical cases to answer. The Practitioners Board believes that the Written Examination has already tested the candidates’ fundamental knowledge and skills in Chinese medicine. The new measure will not compromise the standard of the Licensing Examination so long as the standard of questions for the Clinical Examination is maintained. Besides, the new measures will allow flexibility and enable candidates to choose questions that they can answer more confidently. Therefore, the Practitioners Board decided to provide two “complete cases” and two “incomplete cases” for the candidates to choose one case from each category. Besides, the preparation time will be increased from 15 to 20 minutes. The new arrangement will be implemented with effect from 2007.

21. After the announcement of the four new examination arrangements mentioned above, the number of listed CMPs applying for taking the Written Examination increased from 233 in 2006 to 384 in 2007. Up to now, 1 930 out of 2 890 listed CMPs have never applied for taking the CMP Licensing Examination. According to a survey conducted by a CMP organisation between end 2006 and early 2007, out of some 1 000 respondents, around 20% indicated that they had plans to take the Licensing Examination. Therefore, there will not be a significant change in the number of listed CMPs in the near future.

22. Having regard to the unique background of the development of the CM profession in Hong Kong and their contributions to medical services, the Administration considers that it is pragmatic and in the interest of the community to allow listed CMPs to continue with their

practice under the transitional arrangement. The Administration will continue to maintain contact with the Chinese medicine profession, and hopes that all practising CMPs can eventually attain the standards expected of registered CMPs so as to ensure the standard of the profession as a whole and to protect the health and well-being of the public.

Composition of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong

23. Besides, in February 2007, the Legislative Council Secretariat referred to the Administration a CMP deputation's proposal about the election of CMP representatives in the Council and the Practitioners Board. At the meeting of the Panel on 12 February 2007, the Administration agreed to respond to the proposal in this paper.

24. The existing regulatory framework of Chinese medicine was established and implemented after years of consideration by the Government and broad consultation with the profession, trade and the public. The Chinese Medicine Ordinance was enacted in July 1999 and aims to ensure the professional standard of CMPs and standard of practice of Chinese medicines traders. The Council was established in September 1999. Its major duties include implementation and execution of the various regulatory measures prescribed by the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, including registration of CMPs, the CMP Licensing Examination, disciplinary system, etc. The Council and the Practitioners Board are composed of CMPs, Chinese medicines traders, persons from education and scientific research institutions, Government representatives and lay members.

25. At present, CMPs serving in the Chinese medicine regulatory framework are drawn from different backgrounds, including CMPs who received their training through family heritage or masters; holders of Chinese medicine degrees or higher qualifications; members of local CMP groups or associations; registered and listed CMPs; CMPs in private practice; employed CMPs; CMPs in general practice as well as CMPs practising acupuncture or bone-setting etc. The current arrangement ensures that views from different training backgrounds and different practice models are sufficiently reflected. When appointing members,

the Government aims to make the Council representative of opinions of different sectors in the community, including the Chinese medicine profession and the Chinese medicine trade. We have no plan to amend the Chinese Medicine Ordinance to alter the composition of the Council at this stage.

26. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Department of Health
May 2007

Avenues through which listed CMPs can obtain 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.

**The 28 tertiary education institutes in the Mainland whose
5 years full-time undergraduate degree courses are 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 University 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 University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
17. Shanxi College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
18. Zhejiang University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
19. Hubei College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
20. Hunan University 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 University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
27. Beijing College of Acupuncture – Moxibustion and Orthopaedics - Traumatology
28. Jinan University

Syllabus of the CMP Licensing Examination since 2007

- (1) Basic Theories of Chinese Medicine and Diagnostics of Chinese Medicine
- (2) Chinese Materia Medica and Chinese Medicinal Formulary
- (3) Classics of Chinese Medicine (including Canon of Chinese Medicine, Treatise on Exogenous Febrile Diseases, Synopsis of the Golden Chamber, Seasonal Febrile Diseases, Ancient Chinese Medical Prose, and History of Chinese Medicine and Various Theories of Chinese Medicine)
- (4) Modern Basic Medical Science
- (5) Health Maintenance and the Preservation of Chinese Medicines
- (6) Hong Kong Healthcare System and the Regulatory System of Chinese Medicine
- (7) Internal Medicine of Chinese Medicine
- (8) Gynaecology of Chinese Medicine
- (9) Paediatrics of Chinese Medicine
- (10) Orthopaedics and Traumatology of Chinese Medicine
- (11) Acupuncture and Moxibustion
- (12) External Medicine of Chinese Medicine
- (13) Ophthalmology and Otorhinolaryngology of Chinese Medicine

The syllabus of Paper 1 of the Written Examination includes the six subjects of items (1) to (6), and Paper 2 includes the seven subjects of items (7) to (13). The Clinical Examination includes the six subjects of items (7) to (12).