

**For discussion on
13 November 2006**

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Registration of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

Purpose

During the scrutiny of the Certification for Employee Benefits (Chinese Medicine)(Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2005, the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) undertook to study the issue of providing appropriate assistance to listed Chinese Medicine Practitioners (CMPs) seeking to become registered CMPs, and report to the Panel as soon as possible. This paper updates Members on the progress of this matter.

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, the requirement for continuing education, etc.

3. Established in September 1999, the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (“the Council”) is a statutory body which enforces the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. It is responsible for maintaining the professional standard of CMPs as well as the standard of practice and conduct of Chinese medicine traders, ensuring the proper use of traditional Chinese medicine by the profession, and regulating the safety, quality and efficacy 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.

Transitional Arrangement for Registration of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

4. The registration system for CMPs was an important topic in the course of the drafting of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. The Legislative Council had had thorough discussion about the system, while the Administration had consulted different sectors of the community and the CMP profession. The registration system for CMPs seeks 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.

5. When introducing the statutory regulatory system, the Administration was well 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 in the interim. Based on their practising experience and academic qualifications, these listed CMPs were allowed to get registration through various avenues provided for under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, which are detailed in Annex 1. In brief, as at 3 January 2000, those CMPs with not less than 15 years of continuous practising experience, or with not less than 10 years of continuous practising experience and recognised academic qualifications, could get registration without the need to go through any examination or assessment; those CMPs with at least 10 years of continuous practising experience but without recognised academic qualifications, or with less than 10 years of continuous practising experience and recognised academic qualifications could get registration by passing a one-off Registration Assessment; and the others or those who had failed the Registration Assessment were required to get registration through the Licensing Examination.

6. The 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 based on the information submitted by them with the applications and in accordance with sections 93 to 95 of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance so as to determine the avenues through which they could get 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.

7. 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%.

8. As at the end of September 2006, there were 5 262 registered CMPs in Hong Kong. The number of listed CMPs fell from 7 707 in December 2001 to 2 909 at the end of September 2006. Amongst the registered CMPs, 2 396 obtained registration by direct registration, 1 839 through passing the Registration Assessment and 1 027 through the Licensing Examination. Among these 1 027 CMPs who registered through the Licensing Examination, 594 were former listed CMPs.

The CMP Licensing Examination

9. The Council has conducted the CMP Licensing Examination annually since 2003. Persons eligible for undertaking the examination include:

- (i) Listed CMPs who are required to take the Licensing Examination under the transitional arrangement for registration of CMPs; and
- (ii) Persons holding an undergraduate degree in Chinese medicine awarded upon the completion of a five-year full-time on campus degree course or equivalent recognised by the Practitioners Board (including those awarded by the Baptist University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong, and the 28 Mainland institutions in Annex 2).

10. 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. Given that 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. Traditional Chinese medicine has various kinds of diagnostic and treatment methods, which are however all rooted in the basic theories of Chinese medicine. For appropriate application of any diagnostic and treatment method of Chinese medicine, it is necessary to have command of fundamental knowledge of the basic theories of Chinese medicine. 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, 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 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.

11. The Practitioners Board conducts the written examination and the clinical examination of the Licensing Examination respectively in June and August each year. The Practitioners Board requires that a person must have passed the written examination before he is qualified to sit the clinical examination. The written examination includes a Paper 1 and a Paper 2 covering 20 subjects prior to 2006 (14 subjects for Paper 1 and 6 subjects for Paper 2). Each paper contains 150 multiple-choice questions (including single-choice questions, single-choice questions on clinical case and combination questions) in or before 2006. A pass in the written examination may be valid for five years. If a candidate is unable to pass the clinical examination in five years, he will have to re-sit and pass the written examination again (including Paper 1 and Paper 2) in order to be qualified to undertake the clinical examination. The clinical examination is conducted in the form of an interview. It mainly covers clinical subjects in Chinese medicine, including internal medicine, external medicine, gynaecology, paediatrics, orthopaedics and traumatology, and acupuncture and moxibustion.

Listed CMPs to get registration

12. The Administration appreciates that some practising listed CMPs may not be familiar with the examination as a mode of assessment. The Department of Health (DH) therefore held 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 the candidates with the specific format of the Licensing Examination and helping them to demonstrate their mastery of Chinese medicine accurately in the examination.

13. 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 offer courses tailor-made to the case and needs of listed CMPs to equip them with the necessary Chinese medicine knowledge for the examination.

14. Recently, the Practitioners Board met with CMP representatives to discuss the concerns of listed CMPs and listen to their views about the Licensing Examination. To assist listed CMPs in obtaining registration status under the principle of not 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. The new arrangements to be implemented in 2007 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 - Under the existing arrangement, a candidate must have passed both Paper 1 and 2 of the written examination before he is qualified to sit the clinical examination. The new arrangement, to achieve greater flexibility, allows candidates to concentrate on learning and studying for the subjects of one paper, and makes it possible for them to attain the standard expected by the trade in different subjects in phases.
- (ii) Simplifying the question form of the written examination into single-choice question - The Practitioners Board understands that some CMPs are not quite familiar with the skill of tackling combination questions, and that single-choice question as a question form is simpler. The contents of the questions can remain unchanged.
- (iii) Regrouping the 20 subjects of the written examination into 13 subjects (as detailed in Annex 3) - Regrouping the subjects can highlight the basic and clinical subjects as the key part of the Examination. This will make it easier for the candidates to understand the examination syllabus and allocate suitably their study time.

The Practitioners Board believes that, without unduly affecting the standards of the examination, the new arrangements allow listed CMPs to

pass the examination by phases within a reasonable period. The Council will continue to hold one round of CMP Licensing Examination each year according to the prevalent situation, and review the syllabus and mode of the examination from time to time. The Licensing Examination will, as always, focus on assessing candidates' basic knowledge of Chinese medicine and clinical skills.

15. The Administration hopes that, in the long run, all practising CMPs can attain the standards expected of registered CMPs so as to ensure the professional standard of the profession as a whole and to protect the health and well-being of the public. The Administration will continue to explore viable means to assist listed CMPs who wish to become registered CMPs to obtain registration status, whilst upholding the principle of maintaining the professional standard in Chinese medicine practice. In view of the unique background of the development of the CM profession in Hong Kong and their contributions to medical services all along, the Administration considers that it is pragmatic and in the interests of the actual social needs to allow listed CMPs to continue with their practice.

16. Members are invited to note and comment on the content of this paper.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Department of Health
November 2006

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.

Name of 28 mainland institutes recognised 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 Licensing Examination for Chinese Medicine Practitioners
to be introduced in 2007**

- (1) Basic Theories and Diagnostics of Chinese Medicine
- (2) Chinese Materia Medica and Chinese Medicinal Formulae
- (3) Classics of Chinese Medicine (Canon of Chinese Medicine, Treatise on Exogenous Febrile Diseases, Synopsis of the Golden Chamber, Seasonal Febrile Diseases, Ancient Chinese Medical Proses, and History of Chinese Medicine & 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

Paper 1 of the written examination covers the six subjects from no.1 to no.6; paper 2 of the written examination covers the seven subjects from no.7 to no.13. The clinical examination covers the six subjects from no.7 to no.12.