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The Hong Kong Medical Association

FOUNDED IN 1920·INCORPORATED IN 1960 AS A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
MEMBER OF WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND CONFEDERATION OF MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN ASIA & OCEANIA
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Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
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Regulation of Pharmaceutical Products in Hong Kong

Views of the Hong Kong Medical Association

To safeguard the health of the people of Hong Kong is the motto of the Hong Kong Medical Association. Our focus of the regulation of pharmaceutical products in Hong Kong is on the safety and compliance of drug use by patients. While agreeing to all the proposed enhancement of the regulation of pharmaceutical products in Hong Kong, we would like to point out two areas which require attention.

- a. It is not uncommon for patients to be able to purchase potent drugs such as antibiotics, which are prescription-only medicine directly from authorized sellers of poisons (ASPs) without a doctor's prescription. Even cancer drugs can be bought over the counter without prescription. Although test purchasing and inspection of pharmacies and medicine companies by public officers are carried out but they are done infrequently and are perceived to be ad hoc in response to complaints made. Besides, the penalties imposed on offenders were too lenient to have adequate deterrent effect. Revisit of the penalty level should be considered by the LegCo.
- b. The existing system fails to provide an appropriate level of accountability to the pharmacists, who should be responsible for the quality of professional services provided at community dispensaries. Other than requiring the pharmacists to be present at ASPs whenever they are open for business, the system of compulsory partial ownership of pharmacies by pharmacists should be adopted to enhance professional accountability and responsibility of pharmacists over the sales of prescription medicines at pharmacies. The pharmacist at the pharmacy should identify himself in order that patients who opt for their prescriptions filled at the pharmacies do know who is responsible for the prescription so that accountability for their professional service can be established.