

LETTERHEAD OF UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMITTEE

OUR REF.: UGC/GEN/CON/327/98

YOUR REF.:

TELEPHONE: 2524 3957

21 April 1999

Ms Doris Chan

Clerk to Bills Committee

on the Chinese Medicine Bill

Fax number: 25243802

Council Business Division 2

Legislative Council Secretariat

3/F., Citibank Tower

3 Garden Road

Hong Kong

Dear Ms Chan,

Chinese Medicine Bill

I write to convey to the Bills Committee on the Chinese Medicine Bill the comments of the University Grants Committee (UGC) on the above draft legislation.

2. At its meeting held in April 1999, the UGC considered, on the advice of its Medical Sub-Committee (MSC), the Chinese Medicine Bill which was tabled by the Administration in February 1999 and is being examined by the Bills Committee. The UGC considered that, while much of the Bill deals with matters that are outside the remit of the UGC, the three following issues are of direct concern to the UGC sector.

Role of Chinese Medicine in Hong Kong

3. The Bill has little to say about the role of practitioners of Chinese Medicine. Yet their role has a crucial influence upon the course content (and hence the cost) of related education programmes. In mainland China, which is not as well provided with fully trained doctors as Hong Kong, we understand that schools of Chinese medicine are including an increasing proportion of subjects such as physiology, biochemistry, clinical examination, use of diagnostic technology such as radiography, ultrasound etc. in their curricula. If the Chinese Medicine courses in Hong Kong were to follow a similar pattern, it might greatly alter the

traditional role of Chinese Medicine practitioners in Hong Kong. It is not clear to us whether this possibility has been adequately considered.

Medical Manpower Planning

4. There are currently hints that Hong Kong may be facing an oversupply of fully trained (western) medical practitioners and some suggestions that the intake to the medical schools at HKU and CUHK should be reduced. If practitioners of Chinese Medicine have roles and skills which overlap substantially with western trained practitioners, this may also adversely affect the entry numbers at the two existing medical schools.

Research and Practice

5. The wording of the Bill would appear to prohibit western trained practitioners from using Chinese herbal medicines, acupuncture etc. which they are permitted to do at present. It would be most unfortunate if the Bill prevented western trained practitioners from undertaking clinical research on treatments used in Chinese Medicine. For example, clinical trials comparing Chinese herbal products with western scientific medical products might be particularly appropriate. We trust the Bill will be amended to ensure that this consequence can be avoided.

6. I should be grateful if you could bring the above comments to the attention of the Bills Committee and let the UGC know the results of its deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

(N J French)
Secretary-General
University Grants Committee

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C, MSC
Chairman, Medical Council
(Attn.: Prof Felice Lieh Mak, CBE, JP)
SEM (Attn.: Ms Michelle LI)
SHW