

Bills Committee
Chinese Medicine Bill

Consultation with Chinese Medicines Traders

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to give information on the scope of public consultation on the proposed regulatory framework of Chinese herbal and proprietary medicines, in response to a question raised by a proprietary Chinese medicine traders' association at the fourth meeting of the Bills Committee held on 13 April 1999.

Scope of Consultation

2. In November 1997, Health and Welfare Bureau issued the "Consultation Document on the Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" to invite the public and interested parties to express their views and comments on the proposed regulatory framework.

3. The consultation covered a wide scope. It included, among others, manufacturers and wholesalers of proprietary Chinese medicines and wholesalers and retailers of Chinese herbal medicines. Apart from the usual channels of collecting public opinions through briefings of District Boards etc., meetings and visits to Chinese medicines traders and manufacturers as well as Chinese medicine practitioners' organisations were also conducted. Furthermore, at the end of the consultation period, about 50 submissions from interested individuals and organisations were received.

Meetings and Visits

4. For further consultations with the Chinese medicine trade and practitioners, in May 1998, Health and Welfare Bureau conducted two briefing sessions which were attended by representatives from 46 organisations of Chinese medicine practitioners and Chinese medicine traders and manufacturers (Appendix I, attached to the Chinese version). Detailed explanations on the proposed legislation were given and questions were answered.

5. In February 1998, staff from Department of Health had a meeting with representatives of 3 Chinese medicines manufacturers' associations (Appendix II, attached to the Chinese version). Moreover, meetings were conducted with 11 associations of Chinese medicines traders and manufacturers from March 1998 to September 1998. The purpose of the visits and meetings was to brief members of these organisations on the latest development in the proposed regulation of Chinese medicine, and to solicit their views on the proposed licensing requirements and practising conditions concerned.

6. From March 1998 to December 1998, 14 visits to the individual traders and manufacturers were conducted by Department of Health. The purpose of these visits was to brief them individually on the latest developments, and solicit their views on the proposed regulatory framework, and to gain in-depth understanding of individual situations of the traders and manufacturers concerned.

7. On 21 January 1999, Department of Health conducted another briefing session for the 46 organisations of Chinese medicine practitioners and Chinese medicines traders and manufacturers listed at Appendix I. They were briefed on the content of the draft Chinese Medicine Bill and the proposed regulatory framework in detail. They were invited to express their views.

Conclusion

8. In general, the Chinese medicines traders and manufacturers supported the proposed regulatory system. While some urged for an early implementation, some smaller manufacturers expressed concern on their ability to fulfil the necessary requirements within a relatively short period of time. They requested that initially standards should be set at a reasonable level. They also made suggestions on adjusting some of the proposed licensing requirements and practising conditions. In drafting the Chinese Medicine Bill, these comments have been considered with particular regard to the public interest and the actual circumstances.

Health and Welfare Bureau

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