

**For information on
19 May 2008**

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

Progress Report on Registration of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

PURPOSE

Further to the discussion by this Panel on the registration of Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) at the meeting on 12 November 2007, this paper updates Members on the latest developments.

AN UPDATE OF THE ATTAINMENT OF REGISTRATION STATUS BY LISTED CMPs

2. Since 2000, the registration system of CMPs under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (CMO) has been phased in. It aims to ensure the professional standard of CMPs and protect the health and interests of patients. Under the system, any person who wishes to apply for registration as a registered CMP must first complete a Chinese medicine undergraduate degree course recognised by the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (Practitioners Board) under the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMCHK) and pass the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Licensing Examination (CMP Licensing Examination).

3. The registration system of CMPs was an important issue in drafting the CMO. The Legislative Council had thoroughly discussed the system and the Administration had consulted different sectors of the community, including the Chinese medicine sector. The Administration was aware that there were then quite a number of practising CMPs, and therefore suggested providing transitional arrangements to enable them to continue their practice as listed CMPs.

4. The Administration announced details of the transitional arrangements for the registration of CMPs in July 2000 and started to receive applications for becoming listed CMPs in August the same year. Listed CMPs were allowed to get registration through three avenues provided for under the CMO. The three avenues include (i) direct registration; (ii) passing the Registration Assessment; and (iii) passing the CMP Licensing Examination. Details are set out in **Annex**.

5. As at 30 April 2008, 4 958 listed CMPs have become registered CMPs. Moreover, 158 listed CMPs have enrolled to sit for the written examination of the 2008 CMP Licensing Examination while 50 listed CMPs who have previously passed the written examination have submitted their enrolments for the clinical examination. At present there are still 2 843 listed CMPs in Hong Kong. Among them, 56 are qualified for registration but have yet to register whereas 1 841 have never applied for undertaking the CMP Licensing Examination.

ADMINISTRATION'S SUPPORT FOR LISTED CMPs

6. The transitional arrangement is intended to allow ample time for listed CMPs to further study and subsequently get registration by passing the CMP Licensing Examination. To encourage them to take part in the CMP Licensing Examination without compromising the professional standard in Chinese medicine practice, the Practitioners Board has introduced some new arrangements in the 2007 CMP Licensing Examination, including:

- (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 re-sit the other paper;
- (ii) simplifying the question form of all multiple-choice questions in the written examination;
- (iii) re-grouping the 20 subjects of the written examination into 13 subjects; and
- (iv) allowing candidates to choose clinical cases to answer.

7. To enhance the examination skills of the candidates, including

listed CMPs, the Department of Health (DH) has organised talks on examination skills annually since 2003 to familiarise them with the format of the CMP Licensing Examination so as to help them better demonstrate their knowledge and experience in Chinese medicine in the examination. DH included a session on “common mistakes of candidates” in the talks in 2007. DH will continue to organise such talks on examination skills this year.

8. In addition, the Practitioners Board has always recommended the trade and related organisations to organise well-structured Chinese medicine practice training for listed CMPs and encouraged listed CMPs with training needs to attend such training, with a view to improving the pass rate of the Licensing Examination and CMPs’ practice standards. Since 2004, local Chinese medicine organisations have started to organise Chinese medicine courses for listed CMPs that suit their circumstances and needs, in order to assist them to prepare for the Licensing Examination.

9. To enhance the trade’s awareness of the issue of listed CMPs taking the Licensing Examination, in March this year, the Chairman of the Practitioners Board wrote to the 30 “Continuing Education in Chinese Medicine (CME) Programme Providers” accredited under the “CME system for registered CMPs” to encourage them to offer tailor-made training courses for listed CMPs in addition to providing CME courses for registered CMPs. Where necessary, these providers may apply for funding support under the Professional Services Development Assistance Scheme (PSDAS) in organising such training courses. In fact, local CMP groups have in the past successfully applied for funding under the PSDAS to organise professional development programmes.

THE PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE THE TRAINING COURSES ON THE CMP LICENSING EXAMINATION IN THE CONTINUING EDUCATION FUND

10. In addition to the abovementioned measures to assist listed CMPs, we have followed up on Members’ earlier proposal for including the fee-charging courses on the CMP Licensing Examination in the list of

reimbursable courses for the Continuing Education Fund (CEF). We have liaised with the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Education Bureau (EDB) to understand the operation of the CEF and related matters, and study the feasibility of the proposal.

11. At present, subject to prior assessment by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), education and training courses that fall within eight specified domains may be registered as reimbursable courses under the CEF. These eight domains are business services, financial services, logistics, tourism, creative industry, design, language¹, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills for the workplace.

12. The proposal of expanding the scope of the CEF to include Chinese medicine has to be handled in accordance with the existing policy. The issue of further expansion of the scope of the CEF was fully considered in a review of the CEF completed in May 2007 by the then Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB)². It was concluded in the review that the expansion should tie in with and support the development of the Qualifications Framework (QF)³. The Legislative Council Panel on Manpower was consulted on that conclusion in 2007 and expressed support in this respect. The QF was formally launched on 5 May 2008. Courses designed in accordance with the Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs)⁴ developed by the respective Industry Training

¹ At present, language courses in English, Chinese (written), Putonghua, French, German, Japanese, Spanish and Korean are eligible for registration under the CEF.

² Before the reorganisation of policy bureaux of the Government Secretariat on 1 July 2007, the CEF was under the purview of the then EMB. With effect from 1 July 2007, the policy responsibility for overseeing the operation of the CEF was transferred to the LWB.

³ To enhance the overall competitiveness of our human capital in an increasingly globalised and knowledge-based economy, the Executive Council approved in 2004 the establishment of a QF, which is a seven-level hierarchy covering academic, vocational and continuing education sectors. The aim of establishing the QF is to clearly define the standards of all different qualifications, ensure their quality and indicate the articulation ladders between different levels of qualifications. The QF is currently under the policy responsibility of EDB.

⁴ The SCS for an industry mainly comprises the competency standards required at various levels. These competency standards represent the industry benchmarks for the skills and knowledge required to perform a job at a certain level. The SCSs are expressed in terms of units of competency which can be used for developing qualifications of different levels. In addition, the SCSs also set out assessment guidelines for each unit of competency. EDB has been assisting suitable industries with needs to form their ITACs and develop their respective SCSs for reference by training providers in designing training courses.

Advisory Committees (ITACs) under the QF, if accredited by HKCAAVQ and uploaded onto the Qualifications Register (QR)⁵, may be registered under the CEF as reimbursable courses.

13. EDB has so far formed ITACs for 12 industries⁶ and it will continue to take a progressive approach in helping suitable industries to form ITACs. When considering forming an ITAC for a certain industry, EDB will take into account such factors as the size, prospects, manpower needs, competency requirements and training needs of the industry, as well as whether stakeholders in the industry have reached a consensus on the implementation of the QF. EDB will give priority to non-professional industries because industries subject to professional regulation already have their own registration conditions and requirements as well as clearer competency standards. As such, at present EDB has no plan to form an ITAC for the Chinese medicine trade.

CONCLUSION

14. We will maintain communication with the Chinese medicine trade. It is our hope that all CMPs in Hong Kong can eventually become registered CMPs so as to enhance the overall professional standards of CMPs and safeguard public health and interests.

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

Food and Health Bureau
Department of Health
May 2008

⁵ The QR is an online database on all qualifications, learning programmes and training providers recognised under the QF.

⁶ The 12 industries are printing and publishing, watch and clock, Chinese catering, hairdressing, property management, electrical and mechanical services, jewellery, information and communications technology, automotive, beauty, logistics and banking.

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 CMPs 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 CMPs 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.