



PRESS RELEASE

HERBAL MEDICINES WORKING GROUP REPORT

Friday 27th March 2015

Introduction

On 26th March 2015 the Herbal Medicines and Practitioners Working Group (HMPWG) Chair Professor David Walker published his independent report and recommendations concerning herbal medicine regulationⁱ. This much anticipated report is the culmination of over a year of meetings with a selected group of experts and academics in the field of herbal medicine and medicine law. The **Chinese Medical Council (CMC)** was represented in the Working Group by Mr Don Mei (Chairman of the Chinese Medical Institute & Register and vice-chair of the CICC World Federation of Chinese Medicines Societies) and Professor Bo Ying Ma (Chairman of the Federation of Traditional Chinese Medical Practitioners).

CMC view of the independent report

The CMC has written a detailed analysis of the reportⁱⁱ. It is our opinion that the key conclusions that should be drawn from the report are as follows:

- 1. Herbal Medicine has a very good safety record and the proven risk to the public is low.**
- 2. The Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive has failed to meet its stated aim of ensuring public access to herbal medicines and should be reviewed by the EU commission.**
- 3. The herbal medicine sectors should create umbrella organisations such as the CMC to collaborate on setting standards, collecting safety data and representing the industry with a unified voice. This is especially relevant because there was no recommendation for Statutory Regulation in the report which would have given part of these roles to the HCPC. The CMC will be best placed to set and maintain standards in Chinese Medicine.**
- 4. The MHRA should bring more clarity to the herbal medicines industry by creating a UK list of herbs which could be considered to be foods and/or food supplements.**
- 5. The government should create a simplified but assured system for herbal dispensaries in order to allow practitioners to commission assembly of herbal prescriptions for their patients.**

Many of those involved in herbal medicine will berate the fact that Professor Walker has not recommended Statutory Regulation despite government promises to do so. The CMC shares this frustration but it is important to note that:

1. Statutory Regulation would NOT have allowed herbalists to supply manufactured medicines despite previous information to the contrary.
2. Current government policy is that the sole acceptable reason for Statutory Regulation would be if a lack of Statutory Regulation of herbal medicine is proven to pose a substantial public safety risk.

After a thorough review of all the available evidence, the Chair has concluded that proven risk to the public posed by herbal medicine is so low that Statutory Regulation is not required. This should be seen as official recognition of the safety of herbal medicine. Whilst the CMC supports Statutory Regulation as a concept we believe that it would have been dishonest, fruitless and counterproductive to wildly exaggerate the risks posed to the public by herbal medicine in order to try to convince the Chair to recommend Statutory Regulation.

The most important issue facing the Chinese Medicine practitioners and their patients is access to manufacture herbal medicines. The CMC is dedicated to trying to work with the authorities to find a suitable solution to this ridiculous situation.

The CMC has invited all Chinese Medicine associations and their members to join the CMC in order to raise standards and protect Chinese Medicine with a unified approach.

Notes for editors

The Chinese Medical Council (CMC) was set up in 2003 as an umbrella group for the Chinese Medicine sector to develop unified standards of practice and conduct in Chinese Medicine and to speak with one voice regarding the regulation of Chinese Medicine. It brings together the following professional member associations: Chinese Medical Institute & Register (CMIR), Federation of Traditional Chinese Medical Practitioners (FTCMP), Association of Chinese Medicine Practitioners (ACMP) and Anglo Chinese Medical Doctors Society (ACMDS). The CMC is happy to involve all other Chinese Medicine associations who share our aspirations for a unified movement to build assurance, promote and support Chinese Medicine in the EU.

The Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive has made it illegal for any herbalist to supply finished manufactured herbal medicines that do not have the THR license. This has had a substantial negative impact on Chinese herbal medicine practitioners and patients.

For more information or to interview a representative of the CMC please contact Don Mei by calling 0207 388 6704.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417768/Report_on_Regulation_of_Herbal_Medicines_and_Practitioners.pdf

ⁱⁱ Available by contacting 0207 388 6704