

On The Global Situation Concerning Chinese Medicine Legislation, Education and its Clinical and Academic Future

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It has come to my attention that there are global regressive forces who are putting pressure on the continuous development of Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture and integrative approaches to medicine. I have recently received a request from our Australian colleagues to vote for a motion that supports complementary medicine education, including Chinese Medicine, at universities. Obviously there is an internationally concerted action by certain organisations to stop the teaching of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture at universities. This campaign was started in the UK by a group of professors who placed academic pressure on the UK universities to close down their Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture and other complementary medicine degree courses. In fact, I participated in a debate at the Royal Society of Medicine on 16th April 2010 and won against the motion that 'Much of Complementary Medicine is a Con'. We won by 74 per cent of the votes against 26 per cent for the motion. This illustrates the overwhelming support from the general public and within certain sections of the medical and health profession.

In the UK, the University of Salford has already closed down their degree courses in Acupuncture and complementary medicine as a result of campaigns. This is of great concern for all those who are interested in the development of Chinese Medicine and the integrative future of medicine.

Since January 2012 the UK Department of Health has decided to reverse their decision to protect the professional title of Chinese Medicine practitioners with Statutory Regulation, and just register herbalists in a new regulative policy called "functional protectionism". This would force Chinese Medicine practitioners to separately register as herbalists and acupuncturists. This decision is about to split a unique world heritage that is the integral system of Chinese Medicine, with 5,000 years of clinical history, into separately regulated herbalists and acupuncturists. As a result, Chinese Medicine will be denied of its own identity if the professional title is not protected by laws. The systemic cohesiveness is essential to a Chinese Medicine physician for them to effectively treat their patients. Subsequently, anyone will be able to claim to be a Chinese Medicine Practitioner and this will compromise the protection of the general public that regulation is meant to achieve. If there are no regulating powers in place to govern good practice, then there will be many misuses of Chinese Medicine in the hands of the unscrupulous who use endangered species, illegal substances and perform other activities in the name of Chinese Medicine

My colleagues and I at the Chinese Medical Council UK (CMC UK) have been campaigning for over 10 years now to legalise Chinese Medicine as a profession in the UK and preserve all the integral parts of the unique system of Chinese Medicine. Even in the last announcement from the UK Minister for Health Andrew Lansley on 16th February 2011, it was promised that the Government's intention was to create Statutory Regulation for Chinese Medicine practitioners and herbalists and protect them with separate professional titles. Now, the current intention of the UK Government in its regulation policy is to go down the route of "functional protection" in

order to coordinate with the MHRA (the medicines and healthcare products control agency for the UK) in its enforcement of the EU Directive 2004/24/EC on unlicensed traditional herbal medicine and prescription rights in the UK. This means that the current UK Medicine Act Section 12 (1) will have to be amended to meet the current direction in regulation policy. There will be a public consultation in 2013 after which the Act will have to go through parliamentary sanction and a transition period of approximately 2-3 years.

The EU Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive 2004/24/EC (EU THMPD) on the licensing requirements of herbal medicine implemented in the UK and other EU countries on 30th April 2011 has created controversy in herbal medicine communities as well as amongst consumers. While the public complains about the restrictions that the EU THMPD has placed on their consumer rights, the practitioners from the non-European tradition are filing complaints of cultural and ethnic discrimination against the complex nature of Chinese and Ayurvedic herbal traditions. The Alliance for Natural Health (ANH UK) are taking the case to the European Human Rights Commission.

Since the Beijing Declaration was announced by Dr. Margaret Chan, the Director General of WHO, during the Beijing Summit on Traditional Medicine on 8th November 2008 (on which I reported for the CMIR UK) there has been negligible progress in the acceptance of Chinese Medicine and other traditional medicines in the West. Instead, Chinese Medicine (along with homeopathy) has been experiencing intense pressure from certain academics, clinicians and governmental authorities. Recently, the BBC wanted to interview me on the disappearance of rhinoceros horns from a museum in Britain but I told them that this type of ingredient, along with other parts of endangered species, is no longer used in Chinese Medicine and therefore one cannot assume that the stolen horns are associated with Chinese Medicine. This illustrates the discriminatory attitude against Chinese Medicine that is widespread across the mass media, conventional medical communities and governmental authorities.

Many objections have also been raised on the question of the efficacy of Chinese Medicine and its evidence based on Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs). This is a concerted effort to discredit Chinese Medicine as a valid system of medicine despite it being popularly used by the general public. This illustrates the contradiction between natural systems of medicine, as exemplified by Chinese Medicine, and Western medical enterprises. Chinese Medicine can only be evaluated by a new research methodology that is based on a patient's outcome studies rather than with a generalised model based on medical statistics.

I have recently presented a paper in my Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine PhD/MSc program on the new integrative approach to medical evaluations which takes into account the individualistic and complex nature of Chinese medical diagnosis and treatment. This epistemological reinterpretation involves a re-examination of the logic that is being used in medical reasoning, as well as the examination of medical statistics. According to Professor Claus Schnorrenberger in his paper *The Epistemological Evaluation of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture* Evidence Based Medicine is "a fallacy, a logical error" and "the whole individual patient does not exist at all in the view of EBM". Chinese Medicine, therefore, is a timely solution to the problems of modern scientific medicine that can be integrated to determine the nature of a new medical paradigm.

What is the future ahead of us as we try to evolve a medical system that is more beneficial to the humankind? Is this the beginning of a clash of civilisations or instead the beginning of convergence? As we know, clinically applied Chinese Medicine represents the intellectual thought of the Chinese civilisation in its most concrete and practical form. Evidence Based Medicine epitomises the Western scientific ideas and their fundamental empirical worldview which have recently been questioned by the theory of uncertainty and quantum physicists. Medicine, therefore, is on the front-line of such clashes and convergences of civilisations. The integrative approach to medicine is an attempt to harmonise the two different systems of generalised medicine and individualised medicine. What is being described above are indeed the manifestations of a yin and yang process of mutual opposites and mutual transformations.

I am writing the above in order to raise issues for discussion to all those who are concerned with the future of our world. We need to promote convergence to attain harmony instead of conflicts that lead to wars. As I am expressing to you my sentiments of concern for the important questions that have been raised, I solicit support from all those who are passionate about saving the human civilisation and our Earth from the rapidly deteriorating situations on the international scene, as reflected in the financial crises and the confrontations between the East and the West.

When there are good intentions there is hope. The future of our world depends on how we gather harmony instead of spreading conflicts. Greater interests of the human civilisation should be above the national and regional interests. Our knowledge and wisdom must be shared among all nations to serve the interests of us all. Whether in economics or medicine, we can only be secure and prosperous together. The intellect of the East should be integrated with the intellect of the West to enable a new harmonious world to emerge. If we do not respect each other at this time of crisis, we are dishonouring our ancestors and harming the future of our children.

Wishing you health and inspiration for a new world.

Sincerely yours,

Professor Man Fong Mei

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The Chinese Medical Council UK is conducting a survey on your views regarding the Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture regulation. Please express yourself by visiting the Chinese Medical Council UK website: www.cmc-uk.org.

You are also invited to join the CMIR discussion forum on Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture regulation, integrative medicine issues as well as a discussion on East-West integration. Please visit: www.cmir.org.uk.

Thank you.