

DH hosts 19th Standing Committee Meeting of Western Pacific Regional Forum for the Harmonization of Herbal Medicines

The Department of Health today (January 20) hosted the 19th Standing Committee Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Forum for the Harmonization of Herbal Medicines (FHH) to discuss the harmonisation of standards of herbal medicines.

The meeting was conducted via video-conference with a view to reviewing the latest regulatory measures on herbal medicines among FHH members and strengthening communications and co-operation among regulatory authorities.

Addressing the opening session, the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam, said, "The practice of using herbal medicines dates back hundreds of years. Today herbal medicines are gaining more and more popularity among the public. An extensive number of herbal medicines have been commodified and sold across the world. In some countries, herbal medicines have been used in treating COVID-19 patients alongside Western medicines and with very encouraging results. There is a vital need for our joint effort in sharing our valuable experiences and innovative technology to work toward the common goal of harmonisation of the standards and regulatory requirements of herbal medicines."

Updating the participants on Hong Kong's progress in enhancing the safety and quality of herbal medicines, Dr Lam remarked that Hong Kong has dedicated much effort to setting standards for Chinese medicines. The Hong Kong Chinese Materia Medica Standards (HKCMMS) Project was launched in 2002 to develop standards for commonly used Chinese Materia Medica (CMM), and 10 volumes of HKCMMS have been published covering a total of 330 CMM. The project has been well-recognised in the field of Chinese medicines testing and certification.

Dr Lam said that the commencement of construction of a permanent Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute this year marks an important milestone in the development of Chinese medicines in Hong Kong. Upon its completion in 2025, it would facilitate the pooling of resources and enhance the efficiency of testing for further fostering the development of Chinese medicines.

FHH is a technical forum set up in 2002 to promote public health by recognising and developing standards and technical guidelines with an aim of improving the quality, safety and efficacy of herbal medicines. Drug regulatory authorities from members conduct meeting annually to exchange experiences and technology for working towards the common goal of

harmonisation of the standards and regulatory requirements of herbal medicines.

Participants this year included FHH members from the Mainland, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Vietnam, and representatives from Macao, the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific and the United States Pharmacopeia. This is the second time that Hong Kong hosted a meeting as Co-ordinating Member and Secretariat of FHH since 2009.