

DH investigates case of undeclared Western drug ingredients detected in cream products prescribed by registered Chinese medicine practitioner (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (November 2) urged members of the public who consulted a registered Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP), Ma Wai-pong, practising at Flat 4C2, G/F, 1 Street, Tai Wai Village, Shatin, New Territories, to take note of four cream products he prescribed as they were found to contain undeclared Western drug ingredients.

Acting upon a notification of a suspected poisoning case reported by the Hospital Authority recently, the DH raided the above CMP's premises and seized a quantity of cream products. The DH received test results from the Government Laboratory today confirming that samples of four cream products seized at the above CMP's premises (see photo) were found to contain undeclared Western drug ingredients, namely clobetasol propionate, clotrimazole and diphenhydramine. In response to the relevant incident, a man aged 75 was arrested by the Police today for manufacture of pharmaceutical products without licence, illegal possession of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products. Investigations are ongoing.

Clobetasol propionate, a corticosteroid, is a Part 1 poison and prescription medicine for treating inflammation. Inappropriate use of corticosteroid may cause serious side effects such as Cushing's syndrome, with symptoms including moon face and muscle atrophy. Clotrimazole, a Part 1 poison, is an antifungal drug commonly used for the treatment of fungal skin infections. It can cause side effects such as itching, irritation and an allergic reaction when used topically. Diphenhydramine is a sedating antihistamine used for the symptomatic relief of allergic conditions such as skin itching.

The DH will set up a hotline (2961 8949) for public enquiries related to the cream product prescribed by the above CMP. The hotline will operate during weekdays from 9am to 5pm tomorrow (November 3) onwards.

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap 138), manufacture of pharmaceutical products without licence, illegal possession of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment. Upon completion of the investigation, the DH will consult the Department of Justice on prosecution matters. The DH will refer the case to the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong for consideration of possible disciplinary action.

Members of the public who have been prescribed with cream products by the above CMP who feel unwell or are in doubt should consult health-care professionals as soon as possible. They may submit the medicines to the DH's Chinese Medicine Regulatory Office at 16/F, AIA Kowloon Tower, Landmark East, 100 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, during office hours for disposal.

