

FHB and DH to actively follow up on recommendations of Ombudsman

Regarding the Direct Investigation Report of the Office of the Ombudsman released today (December 13) on the regulation of proprietary Chinese medicine (pCm), the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and the Department of Health (DH) acknowledged that there is room for improvement on the regulation of pCm, and will give further thought and actively follow up on the relevant recommendations of the report.

A spokesman for the FHB said, "We are proceeding to implement the improvement measures including amending the definition of pCm under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549) and providing support to the trade via the \$500 million Chinese Medicine Development Fund.

"Regarding the amendments to the Ordinance, the DH has conducted more than 10 consultation sessions since early this year to collect views on the definition of pCm under the Ordinance from various sectors including the Chinese medicine trade, retailers, the health products trade, the cosmetics and beauty trade, and the Consumer Council. Some 300 submissions were received. The DH has consolidated the recommendations and will soon report to the Chinese Medicines Board under the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (the Council). We plan to brief the Legislative Council about the amendment proposals in the second half of 2019."

The Government is also concerned about the progress of pCm registration. Since implementing the registration system of pCm in 2003, the Board under the Council has established clear guidelines and classification categories based on the compositions and indications of pCm. The Board and the DH have introduced a series of measures, including providing consultancy service for technical support, adjusting the technical requirements and increasing the number of laboratories providing testing service, to assist the trade to complete the reports and furnish other information required for registration.

"At present, all pCm issued with the 'Notice of confirmation of transitional registration of proprietary Chinese medicine' (HKP) currently sold in the market is safe to use by the public. The pCm issued with HKP have submitted test reports that comply with the safety aspect. In recent years, the Government has been proactively providing technical support such that the progress of registration of pCm has significantly improved. The Government will continue to actively explore ways to further expedite the registration of pCm, including providing subsidy to the trade through the Chinese Medicine Development Fund in order to assist them to acquire the necessary technical support and testing service, and to complete the related requirements for the formal registration as soon as possible," the spokesman emphasised.

The DH has been continuously implementing a series of publicity and education campaigns, including issuing letters, visits by "ambassadors",

consultation and briefing sessions, 18-district roving exhibitions, pamphlets, television and radio Announcements in Public Interest and information on websites, to enhance the understanding of the public, the trade and other stakeholders on the requirements for pCm registration. The DH will continue to implement relevant publicity and education campaigns.

The FHB and the DH will conduct a study on establishing an accreditation mechanism for Chinese pharmacists as suggested in the report, including clarifying the qualifications and academic requirements for Chinese pharmacists, their scope of duties and functions, and information on existing local training and employment. The trade and the relevant stakeholders will be consulted on the relevant topics.

"The Government has all along been striving to improve the regulation mechanism of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong, and to convey drug safety messages to the public, the trade and other stakeholders via different channels. The Council has also uploaded the list of pCm fulfilling the requirements set out by the Board to its website (www.cmchk.org.hk/pcm/eng/#main_listpcm.htm) for public access, in order to safeguard public health," the spokesman said.