



The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture UK

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Press Release

28th March 2015

Professor David Walker's Report potentially putting the public at risk

On 26th March 2015, the chair of the Herbal Medicine and Practitioners Working Group (HMPWG) of Department of Health, Professor David Walker, published his report. The report rejected statutory regulation for herbal and Chinese medicine practitioners, which has been on the government agenda for 15 years, and was officially announced by the then Health Secretary on 16th February 2011. This report completely disregards the works of the two previous Department of Health Working Groups and the overwhelming supports from the professions and the general public for the statutory regulation.

The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture UK (ATCM) is very disappointed with the published report. **We strongly** disagree with the views recommended in the report. The report did not reflect the opinions of the majority members of the HMPWG. As the largest and leading professional body in traditional Chinese medicine, we strongly believe that:

- Only a statutory regulation will effectively protect the public safety in using herbal medicines by ensuring that only practitioners who meet the specified training standards can practise herbal medicine.
- Voluntary regulation is powerless to prevent or remove rogue practitioners from practice. With voluntary regulation, there will be no compulsory education and training standards and legal requirements for entry to the profession.

Dr. Kaicun Zhao, president of the Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture UK, has commented that herbal medicine could be as potent as conventional medicine and it can be harmful if they are used in hands of inappropriately trained "practitioners". The report puts the public in confusion to find properly qualified Chinese medicine practitioners and at risk of receiving unsafe herbal medicine services from rogue herbalists.

Dr. Huijun Shen, vice-president of ATCM and a member of the HMPWG, commented that the report was published without pre-consultation with the HMPWG members. It is wrong for the group chairman to make such recommendations in the report disrespecting the opinions of the majority of his members and taking no consideration of enormous evidence on the efficacy of herbal and Chinese medicine. The report shows clear bias and this operation is against the democratic principles. We are very disappointed.

ATCM has joined with other herbal medicine professional bodies and signed an open letter to the Department of Health in objection to prof. Walker's recommendations. We strongly urge the government not to take the report's biased opinions. Instead, we urge the government to fulfil its early promise of statutory regulation. Without it, our profession and the general public will lose the trust to the government.

End

Notes to editor:

1. **Report on the regulation of herbal medicines and practitioners**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-on-regulating-herbal-medicines-and-practitioners>.
2. The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture UK (ATCM) represents over 750 well trained practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine across the UK. ATCM was founded in 1994 and is now the largest self-regulatory body for traditional Chinese medicine including acupuncture practitioners. All full members of ATCM hold a university, college or other recognised professional qualification at or above BSc level.

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