



4 July, 2013.

Press Release

ATCM Call for Enhancing Quality Control of Herbal Medicines and Legislation of Chinese Medicine Practitioners

In responding to the press release of the Daily Mail on the 1st of July 2013 on pesticides contamination of Chinese medicinal herbs, The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture UK (ATCM) has repeated its appeal to the UK medicine authority and government to enhance the quality control of herbal medicines including Chinese herbal medicines and bring forward the statutory legislation of herbal medicine and traditional Chinese medicine professions.

We are very disappointed to know the findings on pesticide contaminations of Chinese medicinal herbs as released by the Daily Mail. However, we feel there are a couple of important points need to be considered:

1. The sources of the herb samples investigated: it is commonly known that Chinese herbs come from a great variety of sources. The quality control process at different sources may well be different. Those reputable Chinese medicinal herb farmers are growing the herbs with implementation of Good Agriculture Practice (GAP) or Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP). It is possible some herbs with poor quality from unreliable sources may enter into the market. The findings may not represent the whole Chinese herbal medicine market in the UK or Europe
2. The standards used for control of contaminations: To our knowledge, the standards used in the UK and other European countries for contamination control of herbs are in most of cases the standards for foods, as currently there are no quality control standards specifically for herbal medicines. We strongly feel that food standards are not appropriate for the quality control of herbal medicines. This is because there is normally no dosage limitation for food - people can eat a kind of food on a daily basis as much as 500 grams, while with Chinese herbal medicines the daily dose is usually 10 grams. With such big difference of 50 times in daily intake dosage between foods and Chinese herbal medicines, using the same standards on contaminations such as insecticides and heavy metals (as reported a few years ago) is simply not appropriate
3. The findings of the investigation indicate that it is urgent to place effective measures for quality control of herbal medicines. This is important for ensuring public safety and maintaining public confidence in using Chinese herbal medicines. We hope that the UK and EU medicine authorities will soon introduce appropriate standards for quality control of medicinal herbs including Chinese medicinal herbs.
4. This report also reminds us the necessity of statutory regulation (SR) of herbal medicine and Chinese medicine professions. High standard Chinese medicine professionals take public safety as the most important issue and they ensure high quality of herbs used in their clinics by carefully choosing reputable and reliable herbal medicine supplies.

Dr. Kaicun Zhao, the president of ATCM, comments:

As the negative news will cause serious damage to the industry and Chinese herbal medicine practitioners, we should read it in its context. Although the contamination may not represent the whole Chinese herbal medicine market in the UK and EU, we definitely feel it is really important to enhance the quality control of herbal medicines including Chinese herbal medicines.

Dr. Zhao further comments

We also strongly urge the government to speed up the SR process for herbal and traditional Chinese medicine practitioners. SR will ensure highly qualified professionals providing high standard Clinical services by using safe and effective herbal medicines. Together with the legislation of herbal medicine quality control, SR will provide further safeguards to public safety.

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Notes to editor:

1. Press Release by Daily Mail; Pesticide are found in herbal cures: Investigation finds Chinese remedies contain potentially toxic levels of chemicals 1st of July 2013 (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2352069/Pesticides-herbal-cures-Investigation-finds-Chinese-remedies-contain-potentially-toxic-levels-chemicals.html>)
2. The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture UK (ATCM) represents over 700 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.

More than 90% of ATCM members prescribe Chinese herbal medicine. TCM practice heavily relies on unlicensed manufactured herbal products. More and more ATCM members have suffered business loss due to lack of availability of manufactured Chinese herbal medicines since May 2011.

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