



Public Consultation on Proposed Amendments to the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Act

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is inviting feedback on the proposed amendments to the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Act 2000 (TCMPA). The public consultation will take place for four weeks from 5 April to 3 May 2018.

2. The TCMPA was enacted in 2000 to raise professional standards and regulate the professional ethics and conduct of registered TCM practitioners, both acupuncturists and TCM physicians. Since then, the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (TCMPB) has progressively put in place programmes and frameworks to raise the professional standards of TCM practitioners in Singapore. MOH has set up the TCM Research Grant (TCMRG) to encourage collaborative research between researchers in public healthcare institutions, the TCM sector and institutes of higher learning, with the objective to better inform effective TCM practices. A TCM Development Grant was also established to support skills development and capability building of the sector.

3. As we continue to raise the professional standards of the TCM sector, it is timely to review the TCMPA to ensure that it remains relevant to the practice of the TCM profession. MOH is proposing amendments to further strengthen the existing provisions and ensure greater alignment with the Acts regulating other healthcare professions. The proposed amendments aim to:

- a) Enhance the structure of the disciplinary framework and strengthen TCMPB's ability to regulate by enhancing powers of investigation, and aligning disciplinary penalties with that of other healthcare professions;
- b) Introduce provisions on the conduct of inquiries related to a TCM practitioner's mental or physical fitness to practice; and
- c) Raise the professional standards of TCM practice by making CPE a requirement for renewal of practising certification.

Enhance Disciplinary Framework and Powers of Investigation

4. The current TCMPA provides for the appointment of Investigation Committees (ICs) to investigate any complaint or matter in respect of which the TCMPB may take action against registered persons under the Act. To enhance the structure and process of the disciplinary framework, the amended TCMPA will provide for the appointment and prescribe the functions of the Complaints Review Committees (CRCs). The amended TCMPA will specify the maximum time allowed for the investigation by the CRC and IC.

5. Currently, the TCMPB can censure, fine up to \$10,000, or impose conditions, suspend or cancel the registration of a TCM practitioner if he is found guilty of professional misconduct, negligence or the other offences under section 19 of the TCMPA. To provide sufficient deterrence to TCM practitioners, the amended TCMPA will provide for the increased maximum fine of \$50,000, in line with the corresponding provisions in the Dental Registration Act (DRA), Pharmacists Registration Act (PRA) and Allied Health Professions Act (AHPA). In addition, the TCMPB may order errant TCM practitioners to give such undertakings as it deems fit, to abstain from certain conduct in future.

Provision to Conduct Inquiry on Fitness to Practice

6. To ensure alignment with corresponding provisions in the Medical Registration Act (MRA), DRA, PRA and AHPA, and to ensure a systematic process to manage cases involving a practitioner's fitness to practise, the amended TCMPA will empower the TCMPB to conduct a health inquiry separate from the inquiry into professional misconduct; and to temporarily suspend a TCM practitioner's practice for a period not exceeding 18 months, if it is necessary for the protection of members of the public or in the interests of the TCM practitioner concerned.

Compulsory Continuing Professional Education

7. MOH and TCMPB introduced the voluntary Continuing Professional Education (CPE) programme in 2013 to enhance the standards and safety of TCM practice. Under the voluntary programme, all registered TCM practitioners are encouraged to fulfil at least 25 CPE points per year. The amended TCMPA will include a provision for the introduction of CPE requirements for TCM practitioners in their application for a practising certificate. This will ensure that TCM practitioners stay up-to-date with the latest developments and promote the sharing of professional knowledge.

8. To provide greater flexibility for TCM practitioners to manage and plan their learning, the CPE requirement for all registered TCM practitioners will be set at 50 CPE points within a two-year period¹. This allows for better planning by TCM practitioners as well as training providers.

9. Teaching and professional sharing are a critical part of knowledge exchange and self-learning. TCM practitioners who take on the role of speakers or instructors at CPE courses will be awarded two CPE points per training hour². MOH and TCMPB will continue to facilitate the upskilling of the TCM community, and identify areas where TCM can help support Singapore's healthcare challenges.

10. Feedback can be submitted to MOH via the online feedback form available at www.moh.gov.sg/tcmpa2018 or via email, post or fax. The modes of feedback are listed below.

- i) By Post:
Ministry of Health

¹ The two-year period corresponds to the maximum duration of a practicing certificate granted.

² Currently, they are awarded one CPE point.

TCMPA Public Consultation
College of Medicine Building
16 College Road
Singapore 169854

ii) By Email:
moh_qsm@moh.gov.sg

iii) By Fax:
6224 1677

11. All feedback should reach MOH by 6pm, 3 May 2018. The feedback received will complement the feedback that MOH had gathered from earlier stakeholder discussions with the TCM community.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
4 APRIL 2018
