



MEDIA RELEASE

Herbs Not Lethal

Recent media articles reported that "There's a false perception that herbal remedies are safer than manufactured medicines, when in fact many contain potentially lethal concentrations of arsenic, mercury and lead".

This is irresponsible and sensationalised reporting.

Your readers are led to infer that a survey of US outlets is applicable to the Australian context. There is no mention in your article that there currently is little or no regulation regarding herbal medicine in North America.

It would have been better if your paper had sourced comments from qualified Traditional Chinese Medicine industry and professional representatives in Australia to provide a balanced view.

Chinese herbal and complementary medicine products are highly regulated in Australia.

Manufactured Chinese herbal medicine products imported into or sold in Australia are regulated by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration. This regulation requires evidence of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) as well as other safety standards that must be met before these products can be made available. Consumers should always look for the Therapeutic Goods Administration "AUST L" or "AUST R" number printed on the front of complementary medicine packaging.

Individual Chinese herbal medicines, although not as highly regulated as manufactured products in Australia, are covered by various regulations including food, customs and quarantine standards. Potentially toxic herbs are regulated under state drugs and poisons scheduling.

The Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association Ltd (AACMA) supports the development of Australian and International standards on safety and quality for individual Chinese herbal medicines.

AACMA cautions against self-medication of herbal remedies and recommends that the public seek the professional advice of a qualified Chinese herbal medicine practitioner before consuming any product claiming to be Chinese herbal medicine. Inappropriate self-medication can lead to harm, particularly where the product is unsuited to the condition being treated, is of an unknown origin, content or quality, or requires preparation and administration by a qualified professional.

Herbs purchased over the internet from overseas sources may not have passed the same controls required in Australia and may include fake, adulterated or illegal substances.

AACMA reassures the many people who are receiving Chinese herbal medicine treatments in Australia that it is safe and effective when prescribed and dispensed by a qualified Chinese medicine practitioner.

Members of the public can locate a qualified AACMA accredited Chinese medicine herbalist by contacting the AACMA National Practitioner Referral Service (1300 725 334) or via the Find a Practitioner service at www.acupuncture.org.au.

Media enquiries

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