

Press Release from the European Herbal and Traditional Medicines Practitioners Association representing 1200 practising UK herbalists: Response to DH Press Release.

1 April 2011

Government woefully short on detail on herbal regulation!

Andy Burnham announced today that herbal and traditional Chinese medicine practitioners are to be regulated by the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC).

Over the last decade, regulation of herbalists and acupuncturists has been considered by a House of Lords' Select Committee and three Department of Health Working Group reports as well as two public consultations. The overwhelming opinion has been that statutory regulation is essential to safeguard the public.

The 2007 White Paper, *Trust, Assurance and Safety, the Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century* specifically stated that emerging healthcare professions should be regulated by the existing statutory bodies. As a result herbalists, acupuncturists and TCM practitioners were directed to develop statutory regulation with the Health Professions Council (HPC).

Now, the Minister has given the job of regulation to the CNHC – a body recently formed to regulate complementary practitioners on a voluntary basis. Currently the CNHC lacks the structure, staff, financial resources or legal power to bring about statutory regulation for the herbal sector and so protect the public from bogus or incompetent practitioners

Herbalists must be statutorily regulated in order to qualify as authorised health professionals under EU legislation so that they can continue to provide their patients with herbal medicines from suppliers and manufacturers. As currently constituted, the CNHC is incapable of delivering this since only statutory councils have these powers.

Michael McIntyre, Chair of the European Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioners Association said today,

“Herbalists should be regulated like other statutorily regulated healthcare practitioners or, the public will lose access to properly regulated herbalists and a wide range of herbal medicines. The Government must give detailed assurances that the legal and structural basis of statutory regulation is fit for purpose or it will betray the millions of people who regularly consult herbal practitioners. So far the Government has singularly failed to provide these guarantees.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The full Department of Health consultation can be found at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_103567

2. The European Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioners Association (EHTPA) was founded in 1993 when it became clear that, with the development of the European Union, the legislative framework under which herbal medicine was practised in the UK and Europe was likely to undergo radical change. It is an umbrella body which represents professional associations of herbal/traditional medicine practitioners offering variously western herbal medicine, Chinese herbal medicine, Ayurveda and traditional Tibetan medicine. The EHTPA is dedicated to the development of herbal/traditional medicine, preserving and enhancing the legal basis of practice across EU Members States and promoting best practice throughout the traditions.

3. The statutory regulation of practitioners of herbal medicine and acupuncture was recommended by the House of Lords Select Committee for Science and Technology in their report: *Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (2000). Three Department of Health Working Parties since then have also recommended statutory regulation, most recently through the: *Report to Ministers from The Department of Health Steering Group on the Statutory Regulation of Practitioners of Acupuncture, Herbal Medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Other Traditional Medicine Systems Practised in the UK*, chaired by Professor Michael Pittilo, Vice-Chancellor of Robert Gordon University. It can be found at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_086359

4. The Department of Health carried out a public consultation into the statutory regulation of herbal medicine and acupuncture in 2004. It received 698 responses, the overwhelming majority in favour of statutory regulation. A report on this consultation was published in 2005. In its response, the government accepted the case for regulation and committed itself to a timetable that should have seen regulation in place later that year. We understand that the majority of the 6,500 responses to the recent 2009 public consultation were also in favour of statutory regulation.