

Practitioner Webinar: Questions and answers

Purpose

On 28 November 2024, the Board hosted its annual Practitioner Webinar to Chinese Medicine practitioners and students. This document outlines the questions and answers provided at the end of the presentation.

Q&As

What is the difference between a 'complaint' and a 'notification'?

These terms are interchangeable; there is no difference. You will often hear Ahpra and the National Boards refer to a complaint as a notification to align with the terminology of the National Law.

Are registered Chinese medicine practitioners able to refer patients to undertake radiology diagnostic imaging or laboratory tests

While Chinese medicine practitioners can technically refer, there are important considerations to be mindful of.

The current Medicare arrangements for diagnostic imaging and laboratory tests only offer patient rebates when referred by a registered health practitioner eligible for Medicare rebates. This means patients referred by Chinese medicine practitioners will be ineligible to receive any rebates and incur the full costs.

It is generally best practice for health practitioners to refer patients back to their general medical practitioner to refer and manage test results.

How long does the notification process take?

This is often dependent on the type of notification. While sometimes it may take longer than anticipated, it is important to bear in mind that Ahpra and the Board take the required time to obtain relevant information from the notifier, practitioner and other sources to inform its decision making. If your notification is being managed by Ahpra, we encourage you to reach out to your assigned Regulatory Advisor for further guidance on anticipated timeframes.

Note that matters being managed by the Office of the Health Ombudsman or other co-regulatory bodies may involve different timeframes and will need to be queried with them directly.

Can registered Acupuncturists receive patient referrals from a GP?

Yes. It is common for Acupuncturists to work within the same centre as GPs and receive referrals from them. Acupuncturists also commonly have referral relationships with local GPs and other health practitioners such as orthopaedic surgeons and physiotherapists.

It is important that in accepting referrals, you adhere to your responsibilities under the [Shared Code of Conduct](#) by maintaining communication with the referring practitioner to ensure continuity of care. This includes updating the referrer on the treatment plan and advising when you have concluded treatment.

If practitioners are unable to advertise that they are safe and effective, how does the public know that safe and effective care is being provided, or that they are being offered prior treatment?

As outlined in our webinar, the Board is undertaking a public information campaign which provides information about the safe care of Acupuncturists and Chinese medicine practitioners within Australia. This includes highlighting that registered Chinese medicine practitioners are suitably trained and qualified to provide safe care within Australia.

If you fail the regulatory examination(s), can you sit the exam again?

Yes, you can automatically register for the next available sitting. The Board however recommends that examinees take time to study and develop your skills before resitting.

Further, if you gain registration in one division and decide to apply for another, you will only need to successfully complete the questions/stations in relation to the new division you are applying for.

The costs associated with the Multiple-Choice Question (MCQ) and Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) are outlined on the Board's [website](#).

In the Board's common mistakes of advertising page, it notes that practitioners cannot state that they treat digestive disorders. Would it be acceptable to instead say that we manage symptoms related to digestive disorders?

It may, provided that you ensure your advertising cannot potentially mislead consumers into thinking that you may treat or cure their digestive disorder and any claim is supported by [acceptable scientific evidence](#). For instance, you may say that your treatment may be able to assist with the management of symptoms relating to or caused by digestive disorders. We encourage practitioners to read through our [guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#) to ensure they are aware of their obligations.

Can a registered Acupuncturist that is not registered as a herbalist or dispenser mix single herbs into formulas? Also, can their assistant who has no qualifications in Chinese medicine mix herbs for them?

The Board's [Guidelines for safe Chinese herbal medicine practice](#) outlines dispensing requirements for medicines used in Chinese herbal medicine practice.

As outlined in these guidelines, unregistered dispensary assistants who are supervised by registered practitioners need to be familiar in these guidelines.

However, mixing single powdered herbs into formulas involves preparing or compounding herbal medicines, which is typically categorised as herbal dispensing and would require registration in Chinese herbal medicine or Chinese herbal dispensing.

It is important that any unregistered health practitioner or practitioner not registered in the division of Chinese herbal medicine or Chinese herbal dispensing is not representing themselves to be registered in these divisions.

Acupuncturists who are not also registered as Chinese herbal medicine practitioners are not able to prescribe or dispense herbal medicines.

Please note that the Board is unable to offer specific advice on individual circumstances. Your professional association or independent legal advisor may be able to advise you further.

Related resources

[Presentation recording: Managing complaints and your wellbeing, 18 July 2024](#)

[For practitioners: Information about the notifications process](#)

[Support services](#)

[Checklist for practitioners handling feedback and complaints](#)

[CMBA regulatory examinations](#)

[The Shared Code of Conduct](#)

[CMBA Guidelines for safe practice of Chinese herbal medicine](#)

[CMBA Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#)