



Advertising regulated health services

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Introduced by

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land we are meeting on for their continuing connection to land, sea, community and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Members of the Board



Adjunct professor Danforn Lim
Chair and practitioner member from
NSW



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Community member from Victoria



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Stephanie Campbell
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Good practice advertising



Gives balanced and accurate information



Overall impression created is not misleading



Describes and/or shows realistic results supported by acceptable evidence



Presents the risks and recovery process accurately

Advertising guidelines

- Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service
- Advertising hub
 - www.ahpra.gov.au/Resources/Advertising-hub
 - Chinese medicine examples
 - Acceptable evidence in advertising
- Other advertising regulators, e.g. Therapeutic Goods Administration, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission



Advertising hub

Advertising is an important way health practitioners and providers of regulated health services promote their services to the public.

Advertising can influence a consumer's decision-making about their health care needs. It is important that consumers have access to information that is accurate, not misleading, and is supported by acceptable evidence.

The advertising hub contains the laws and other guidance about how to advertise, resources to help advertisers understand their advertising obligations and to check their advertising is correct, and information for the public including about how to make a complaint and how we manage complaints.

New Guidelines for advertising higher risk non-surgical cosmetic procedures will come into effect on 2 September 2025. [Read the advance copy now.](#)

Advertising guidelines and other guidance

Read the advertising guidelines and other guidance about the advertising requirements

[Find out more »](#)

Resources for advertisers

Practical tools and examples to help understand and apply the advertising requirements

[Explore the resources »](#)

Information for the public

Helpful information for consumers and the public about advertising of regulated health services

[Get informed »](#)

Advertising complaints

Information about how to make a complaint and the complaints process

[Learn more »](#)

Frequently asked questions

Answers to common questions about advertising

[Read more »](#)

Cosmetic surgery advertising guidelines

Guidelines for medical practitioners advertising cosmetic surgery

[Read the guidelines »](#)

Protected titles in Chinese medicine



- The National Law protects prohibits the use of titles by individuals including:
 - Chinese medicine practitioner
 - Acupuncturist
 - Chinese herbal dispenser
 - Chinese herbal medicine practitioner
 - Oriental medicine practitioner

Advertising rules – what Section 133 of the National Law does not allow



- False, misleading or deceptive or is likely to be misleading or deceptive.
- Gift, discount or inducement without terms and conditions.
- Uses testimonials or purported testimonials.
- Unreasonable expectation of beneficial treatment.
- Encourages indiscriminate or unnecessary use of regulated health services.
- In proceedings for an offence against this section, a court may have regard to a guideline approved by a National Board about the advertising of regulated health services.

Acceptable evidence in advertising

- Advertising vs clinical decision-making
 - general public vs individual patient
 - informed consent including evidence and clarification
- Experience base vs scientific evidence
- Assessing evidence
 - source – e.g. peer review
 - relevance – including patient population
 - inclusion – include evidence that contradicts claims
 - level – high level study design
 - quality – random control with appropriate sample
 - strength – statistical significance and meaningful clinical effect

Quick reference guide



Quick reference guide: Acceptable levels of evidence in advertising for Chinese medicine practitioners

Overview

The *Quick reference guide: Acceptable levels of evidence in advertising for Chinese medicine practitioners* (the quick reference guide) has been developed to provide clear advice to both practitioners and the public. Advertisers must ensure that any statements and claims made about Chinese medicine practice are not false, misleading, deceptive or create an unreasonable expectation of benefits from such services. Any therapeutic claims that are made in advertising must be substantiated by acceptable evidence.

This quick reference guide should be used together with the [Check your advertising: Chinese medicine examples](#). You should be familiar with both documents when assessing whether your advertising is compliant with the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law](#) (the National Law), along with other resources on our website including the [Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#) (the Guidelines).

Avoid the following

- 'Safe' or 'effective' without appropriate evidence or context.
- Claims to treat specific conditions like cancer, chronic illness, or mental health without clarifying scope or evidence.
- Fertility and pregnancy claims without strong specific evidence.
- Using restricted titles like 'specialist'.
- Testimonials with clinical content.
- All therapeutic claims must be supported by acceptable evidence
 - e.g. *'Acupuncture turns breech babies'*.

Chinese medicine examples

[Home](#) / [Resources](#) / [Advertising hub](#) / [Resources for advertisers](#) / [Check your advertising: Chinese...](#)

Check your advertising: Chinese medicine examples

Resources

Joint statement on professional responsibilities for prescribing and dispensing medicines

Checklist for practitioners handling feedback and complaints

Code of conduct ▼

Protecting patients from sexual misconduct in healthcare

Advertising hub ▲

Advertising guidelines and other guidance ▼

Resources for advertisers ▲

Examples common to all regulated professions

Self-assessment tool

Testimonials: Understand the requirements

Titles in health advertising

**Check your advertising:
Chinese medicine examples**

This information outlines examples of advertising claims that don't meet the legal requirements and how to make them compliant. Ahpra and the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (the Board) are sharing these examples to help you check your own advertising to ensure you comply with your obligations under the [National Law](#).

Why the advertising is non-compliant and how the specific examples could be corrected is based on our assessment of advertising complaints we have received for the Chinese medicine profession. To do this we apply the National Law and any further guidance that National Boards and Ahpra publish, including the *Guidelines for advertising a regulated health services* and resources on our websites.

The examples below are specific to Chinese medicine practitioners and are some of the most common mistakes we see. We have also published [common examples](#) which highlight advertising from various regulated health professions but are still important to help you make your advertising compliant.

Important information

Check if your advertising complies with legal requirements

- Always be clear about the level of evidence to support a claim. You should not make claims about the effectiveness of the treatment or services you provide if those claims cannot be substantiated with [acceptable evidence](#).
- We have published a [Summary of the advertising requirements](#) to help explain the legal requirements for advertising a regulated health service.
- You should also refer to the full [Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#).

Safe and effective

Are there any side effects or risks associated with cosmetic acupuncture?

Cosmetic acupuncture is regarded as a gentle and safe treatment.

The great thing is, there is minimal downtime after and between treatments.

After your treatment, it is normal to experience some post-needling effects such as a flushed face, but this will self-resolve in a few hours.

Small bruises may occur, but this is usually minor and painless and resolves in a few days.

Safe and effective

Advertising should not imply that a treatment or service cannot cause harm or have no adverse effects.

Example wording



Acupuncture and herbs are both an integral part of Chinese medicine practice, which has been proven to be a very safe and effective healthcare modality in Australia.

Recommended solution



Acupuncture and herbs are both an integral part of Chinese medicine practice, which may help patients to manage a range of symptoms including pain, stress and fatigue.

Pregnancy

We recommend acupuncture 1-2 times per week post transfer through the first trimester. The focus is to assist implantation and prevent miscarriage, moderate immunological factors, increase energy, and prevent pregnancy complications.

Comparative claims

People not taking your health seriously ... that don't impress me much.

Have you been in the position where you know something isn't right about your health, but doctors or specialists are persistent about you being 'just fine'?

Well not with me! Regardless of how 'normal' your test results are, I will work as hard as I can to find the best possible answer and solution to your health complaints.

Not all doctors are like this and I know of a couple who work really hard to get answers for their patients as well. But just know that if you have been let down in the past by this, that I am here to help you get better.

My bookings are open and can be done through the link in my bio. Book in if you're ready for someone to take your health seriously!

Fertility

Acupuncture can:

- ⚠️ treat infertility, and
- ⚠️ balance your hormones, regulate your ovulation cycle, and increase the lining thickness of the uterus
- ⚠️ can improve your sperm count, sperm quality and/or motility
- ✅ Many health practitioners may recommend acupuncture as an adjunct treatment that may assist with IVF treatment. There is continuing research about how acupuncture can assist with the effectiveness of IVF treatment. You should consult your treating practitioner/s about how acupuncture may be able to help you

Pregnancy

Are you pregnant? Acupuncture can help with:

- ✓ Pregnancy-related aches and pains
- ✓ Nausea and vomiting
- ⚠ Preventing miscarriage
- ⚠ Lowering the chance of caesarean section
- ⚠ Correcting breech position using acupuncture and moxibustion

Are you pregnant? Chinese medicine treatment may be able to help pregnant women with:

- ✓ Pregnancy-related musculoskeletal pains
- ✓ Nausea and vomiting

Using specialist terms in advertising



- 'Specialist' is a category of registration under the National Law.
- There are no recognised specialist categories in the Chinese medicine profession in Australia.
- Even if you have extensive training and experience, you cannot give the impression or advertise that you specialise in/or are a specialist health practitioner in Australia unless you hold specialist registration in another regulated health profession.

Using an alternative name in advertising



- Health practitioners are registered under their legal name, but some practise under an alternative name.
- You can apply to have one alternative name added to the register of practitioners. This may be a traditional name or an anglicised or shortened name.
- Having the name that you practise under appear on public register is good practice and makes it easy for the public to confirm you are a registered health practitioner
- Including your registration number and being clear about which division(s) you are registered in allows the public to make informed decisions about their care.

How can I check if I'm compliant?

- The Ahpra website has a self-assessment tool to help you comply with the National Law when advertising a regulated health service.
- [Self-assessment tool for practitioners](#)



Read – Familiarise yourself with Ahpra's advertising guidelines and examples



Identify – Locate all advertising you control, including print, online and third-party material



Review – Use the tool to assess content from the public's point of view



Change – Correct any content that may mislead or breach legal requirements

What advertising complaints can we consider?



Am I in the right place?



Examples of advertising complaints we can consider:

- ✓ misleading use of titles such as 'specialist' and 'Dr'
- ✓ advertising treatments without supporting evidence
- ✓ gifts, discounts or offers without terms and conditions
- ✓ testimonials



Examples of advertising complaints we can't consider:

- ✗ trademark or other business disputes
- ✗ advertising of medicines e.g. Botox or medical devices e.g. x-rays
- ✗ private health insurance

Complaints and our role

- We primarily receive advertising complaints from the public.
- In managing complaints, we protect the public from unlawful advertising.
- We identify whether the person who controls the advertising is registered.
- If they are registered, Ahpra's Advertising Compliance team sends correspondence to the practitioner to raise our concern and ask them to:



- If advertising is controlled by business or a non-registrant, then Ahpra's Criminal Offences Unit manages the case, and may prosecute under section 133.

What do we do about non-compliant advertising?



Preliminary audit of website and social media



Low risk: Correspondence explaining obligations



Higher risk: Further audit and engagement



Continued noncompliance: Regulatory action

Advertising rules – National Law

- Health Practitioner Regulation National Law
 - Section 133 – Advertising
 - Section 115 – Restriction on use of specialist titles
 - Section 115A – Claims by persons as to membership of surgical class
 - Section 118 – Claims by persons as to specialist registration
 - Section 119 – Claims about type of registration or registration in a recognised specialty
- Penalties may include up to:
 - Individual – \$60,000 or 3 years imprisonment
 - Body corporate – \$120,000

Summary



Describe symptom management, not cures



Ensure advertising is clear, honest and supported by evidence



When in doubt, refer to Ahpra guidance or seek advice from a professional adviser or insurer



Review all advertising to avoid misleading the public

Keep advertising clear, honest and safe

Helpful resources

- [Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#)
- [Ahpra's Advertising Hub](#)
- [Advertising compliance and enforcement strategy](#)
- [Guidelines for advertising cosmetic procedures](#)
- [Acceptable evidence in health advertising](#)
- [Factors for assessing if evidence is acceptable](#)
- [Examples common to all regulated professions](#)
- [Self-assessment tool for practitioners](#)
- [Testimonials: Understand the requirements](#)
- [Titles in health advertising](#)
- [Social media: How to meet your obligations under the National Law](#)
- [Check your advertising: Chinese medicine examples](#)
- [Chinese Medicine Board of Australia Website](#)

Questions