Chinese Medicine Board
Ahpra

Quick reference guide

Guidelines for safe Chinese herbal medicine practice

1 September 2023

Guidelines for safe Chinese herbal medicine practice

This quick reference guide has been developed by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (the Board) to remind Chinese medicine practitioners of the main points of the important *Guidelines for safe herbal medicine practice* (the guidelines).

Chinese medicine practitioners are required to be familiar with the full guidelines available on the Board's website at www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Guidelines-for-safe-practice.

1. Herbal nomenclature

Herbs used in Chinese herbal medicine are known by various names. Chinese medicine practitioners need to use the authorised *pin yin* name, with or without the addition of other nomenclature such as Chinese characters. The use of *pin yin* makes it clear to all and is concise and easy to apply. The herb name in Chinese characters corresponds to the herb name in *pin yin*.

To help Chinese medicine practitioners, other members of the healthcare team and patients, the Board has published a *Nomenclature Compendium of commonly used herbs and other ingredients in Chinese medicine* at www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Guidelines-for-safe-practice.

2. Prescription requirements

Prescriptions are to be printed or hand-written clearly and legibly, in plain English.[1]

Table 1: Details required on prescriptions

Information required on all prescriptions	
Name of patient (given name and family name) and, when applicable, details of patient's parent, guardian, or agent	
The name, address, registration number, and contact telephone number of the prescriber	
Date prescribed (day/month/year format)	
Specific warnings (when appropriate)	
Name(s) of the Chinese herbal medicine (in authorised *pin yin*)	
Expiry date of prescription (i.e. 'date not to be dispensed after')	
Number of repeats of the prescription	
Prescribing practitioner's signature	
Specific information required for prescriptions for individualised formulations using raw and processed Chinese herbal medicine ingredients	**Specific information required on prescriptions for manufactured medicines**
Specific directions for use (dose, preparation/cooking, storage, route of administration, frequency, timing of consumption, duration of consumption)	Dosage (number of pills/tablets and instructions on how many times per day if different from the standard label (e.g. 'eight pills, three times a day')
Amount of each Chinese herbal medicine ingredient (measured in grams)	Duration of consumption (e.g. 'two weeks', 'while symptoms persist', 'until finished')
Form of processing (when relevant)	
Number of packets (when relevant)	

[1] All information can also be provided in another language in addition to English if needed.

3. Labelling requirements for dispensed medicines

3.1 Raw herbs and herbal extracts

Table 2: Labelling requirements for dispensed medicines

Information required on all prescriptions[2] (The dispensing label is to be firmly attached to the immediate container)	
Name of patient (given name and family name) and, when applicable, details of patient's parent, guardian, or agent	
The name, address, registration number, and contact telephone number of the dispenser	
The name of prescriber, if different from the dispenser	
Date dispensed (day/month/year format)	
Specific warnings (when appropriate)	
Name(s) of the Chinese herbal medicine (in authorised *pin yin*)	
Specific directions for use (dose, preparation/cooking, storage, route of administration, frequency, timing of consumption, duration of consumption) Instructions for preparing or cooking Chinese herbal medicine ingredients should be provided in English and, if desirable, in the patient's language. These instructions can be on a separate sheet of paper, on the prescription or on the label	
Dispenser's signature	
Specific information required for dispensing labels using raw and processed Chinese herbal medicines individualised formulations	**Specific information required on dispensing labels for individualised formulations using extracts of Chinese herbal medicine ingredients**
Number of packets (when relevant)	Concentration ratio of the extract (e.g. 5:1) If all Chinese herbal medicine extracts, such as granules used in the prescription, have the same concentration, for example 5:1 then this can be stated as '*all 5:1 concentration*' under the list of Chinese herbal medicine ingredients and amounts

3.2 Manufactured herbal medicines (unmodified)

When a registered Chinese medicine practitioner supplies a manufactured Chinese herbal medicine as part of a consultation, the medicine is to retain the original label.[3]

These medicines must be either listed or registered on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (www.tga.gov.au/resources/artg) and comply with Good Manufacturing Practice for supply to be lawful.

3.3 Repackaging manufactured herbal medicines

Repackaging is strongly discouraged. Manufactured herbal medicines should be supplied with the original packaging intact. Expectations about the occasional valid dispensing of a small quantity for a specific patient are described in section 4.3 of the guidelines.

[2] All information can also be provided in another language in addition to English if needed.
[3] These details must not be obscured if notations or additional labels are added.

4. Patient information requirements

Practitioners are to provide enough information about medicines to comply with the requirements for informed consent.

A copy of the prescription must be provided to the patient.

The prescriber is to inform patients that there is a possibility of reactions to the medicines, and what to do if they are concerned about a potential adverse reaction.

5. Patient health records

Clear and complete information about each prescription of medicine/s is to be recorded for every consultation.

When the dispensary service is independent of the prescribing practitioner, the dispenser needs to keep accurate records of the medicines dispensed.

For the retention of records and other relevant matters, practitioners must comply with their state and territory laws.

6. Adverse event reporting

Chinese medicine practitioners have a professional responsibility to report actual or suspected adverse events.

Patients or any member of the public may also report adverse events online to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

Appendix 4 of the guidelines provides guidance on reporting adverse events to the TGA.

For further information about reporting an adverse event see: www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems.

7. Compounding and dispensing

Independent dispensers are:

- to exercise judgement to make sure medicine conforms to the prescriber's requirements:
  - only provide the number of repeats specified on the prescription, no more, and
  - do not dispense an undated or an expired prescription or any prescription that does not meet the prescription requirements.
- to provide clear written instructions to the patient on usage of the medicine including any warnings. Full details are listed in section 10.4 of the guidelines.
- only to dispense prescriptions from Chinese herbal medicine practitioners who are registered in Australia.

8. Managing potential conflicts of interest

As practitioners are often both the prescriber and the dispenser, they are to ensure that the decision to prescribe and supply a medicine is always in the best interest of their patient. A conflict of interest exists where a financial benefit to a person influences the service they provide to others.

9. Management and operation of a Chinese herbal dispensary

Appendix 3 of the guidelines provides detailed guidance on the management and operation of a Chinese medicine dispensary.

Date of effect – 1 December 2023: *Guidelines for safe Chinese herbal medicine practice.*