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Chair's message

On behalf of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (the National Board), welcome to the February 2014 issue of the Board's newsletter. Our aim is to provide you with updates and advice relevant to the regulation of Chinese medicine practice in Australia as stipulated in the National Law¹ – that is, the primary role of the National Board is to protect public health and safety.

National registration for Chinese medicine has been a major milestone for the profession, which requires members of the profession to adjust to meet new regulatory standards and public expectations. The National Board is in its infancy as a regulator. Hence, effective engagement with stakeholders such as members of the profession is one of the priorities of the National Board.

After one and a half years of operation, I am pleased to advise you that the National Board has met all its major milestones. The online renewal of registration in 2013, for example, went smoothly and efficiently.

As of 31 December 2013, 4,093 Chinese medicine practitioners are included on the national register of health

practitioners, and members of the Australian public are able to identify suitably qualified practitioners in their communities. To view detailed data about the Chinese medicine workforce, which is updated quarterly, go to: www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au/About/Statistics.aspx.

We are now halfway through the 'grandparenting' period (which will end in June 2015), which has been a significant challenge. We have learned along the way and adjusted our procedures as quickly as possible to improve the processes involved in registering practitioners for the first time, and for renewing registration. The Board has:

- restructured its committees in response to workload to maintain efficiency
- reviewed and updated its priorities to ensure we are operating in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner, and
- set its strategic priorities, including engaging with stakeholders to gather feedback to guide its operations.

You may be aware that each of the 14 National Boards within the National Scheme is required to be financially independent and operate on a strict cost-recovery basis through the registration fees paid by its profession. For the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia, the most unpredictable costs

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

would be legal and other costs of dealing with notifications. The Board has been working closely with AHPRA to develop risk management strategies that will enable us to deliver effective and efficient regulation to protect public health and safety while containing costs. Members of the profession have a crucial role to play by complying with the Board's standards of professional practice.



To guide the profession, the Board has been working on a series of policies and guidelines. You are invited to contribute to the consultation processes for these publications, such as the recently completed *Infection prevention and control guidelines for acupuncture practice*. I look forward to your contributions in 2014.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Charlie Xue

Chair, Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

Registration matters

Snapshot of the profession

The National Board's latest quarterly data update shows there are 4,093 registered Chinese medicine practitioners in Australia, of whom 109 are non-practising. This is a decrease of 47 practitioners in total since the last update was published in the October 2013 newsletter. Table 1 shows practitioner numbers by type and by state and territory.

Table 2 – Chinese medicine practitioners: registration divisions by state and territory (December 2013)

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP	Total
Acupuncturist	23	410	8	528	84	20	411	75	3	1,562
Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbal Dispensing		1		3						4
Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbal Dispensing and Chinese Herbal Medicine	7	338		38	7		47	17	1	455
Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbal Medicine	32	846	4	203	60	13	664	105	31	1,958
Chinese Herbal Dispensing		34		1	1		3	2		41
Chinese Herbal Dispensing and Chinese Herbal Medicine		11			2					13
Chinese Herbal Medicine		22		7	1	1	25	3	1	60
Total	62	1,662	12	780	155	34	1,150	202	36	4,093

Table 1 – Chinese medicine practitioners: registration type by state and territory (December 2013)

State	General	Limited (Total of Subtypes)	Teaching or Research	Non-practising	Total
ACT	61			1	62
NSW	1,649			13	1,662
NT	12				12
QLD	765			15	780
SA	154			1	155
TAS	34				34
VIC	1,094			56	1,150
WA	201			1	201
Not Stated	14			22	36
Total	3,984			109	4,093

Table 2 shows registration numbers by division, with by far the largest number of registrants practising both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine (1,958). There are 1,562 practitioners registered solely as acupuncturists.

For further registration data, visit the [About>Statistics](#) section of the Board's website.

Renewal process and outcomes

The Board is very pleased with the 2013 annual registration renewal process. By 31 December 2013, 96 per cent of practitioners who were due to renew had done so, with four per cent still in assessment. Three per cent did not renew, and one per cent withdrew – their registration lapsed and they were removed from the register.

English language conditions

If you have conditions on your registration, once your renewal application is lodged, you may be asked to provide further information, complete a form and/or provide evidence that you are meeting the conditions on your registration. AHPRA will contact you directly via a letter if this is required.

Once you have provided the requested information, your renewal application will be assessed on an individual basis.

You will remain registered and can continue to practise while your application for renewal is being assessed. If there is any possibility that your registration status will change AHPRA will contact you directly, and you will have an opportunity to respond.

The Board has published a *Renewal fact sheet for practitioners with conditions on registration* under [Codes and guidelines>FAQ](#) on its website.

Specific questions and answers related to English language conditions are published in an FAQ sheet under [Codes and guidelines>FAQ](#).

Publications and guidelines from the Board

Revised guidelines, code and policy released, effective from March 2014

During 2013, the Board participated in a cross-Board consultation on revisions to the guidelines that are common to all National Boards. The code of conduct common to most National Boards was also reviewed and revised.

These documents have now been published online:

- the *Code of conduct*
- *Guidelines for advertising regulated health services*
- *Guidelines for mandatory notifications*, and
- a new *Social media policy*.

The documents contain important information for all registered health practitioners and come into effect on 17 March 2014. They have been released early to give practitioners time to read and understand their obligations and be ready for when they come into effect.

Chinese medicine practitioners need to familiarise themselves with this guidance to ensure their practice meets National Board expectations from mid-March 2014. To view the documents, visit [Code and guidelines](#) on the Board's website. Frequently asked questions (FAQ) on the transition from the current to the new/revised documents are also available on the [FAQ page](#).

New guidelines being developed

In early 2014 the Board will be consulting on:

- guidelines on writing prescriptions, labelling and dispensing for Chinese medicine practitioners, and
- supervision guidelines.

Infection prevention and control guidelines and compliance

In October 2013 the National Board issued its *Infection prevention and control guidelines for acupuncture practice*, which apply nationally to all Chinese medicine practitioners registered in the division of acupuncture. You can find these guidelines under [Codes and guidelines](#) on the Board's website.

As infection control continues to be a theme in notifications the Board draws your attention to these guidelines.

To assist practitioners the Board has also published a *Quick reference guide* – also available under [Codes and guidelines](#). The guide is a two-page summary of infection control risks and risk management procedures specific to acupuncture practice. This can be printed off, laminated and displayed in your clinic.

Victorian amendment to regulation for acupuncturist arrangements

Consequential amendments have been made to regulation 15 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009. The amendments to regulation 15 will exempt the following practitioners from the requirement to register their business premises under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*:

- practitioners who are registered with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia in the division of acupuncture, and
- registered practitioners from other health professions who have an endorsement for acupuncture.

Update on practitioner audit

All registered practitioners are required to comply with a range of registration standards that have been developed by the Board that registers them. The registration standards are published on each Board's website under *Registration standards*.

AHPRA and the National Boards are developing a nationally consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards. Pilot audits were conducted for the chiropractic, optometry and pharmacy professions. The pilot audits were designed to determine the frequency, size and type of audits required and establish our audit methodology.

The results of phase one and phase two of the audit pilots are available on the [AHPRA website](#) under *Registration*. The phase two audit pilot was conducted in line with the recommendations of the phase one pilot report and involved auditing a fixed sample size from three professions.

A third phase started in May 2013 for the nursing and midwifery professions. The results from all phases of the pilot will be used to develop an overall auditing framework and audit program, which will be rolled out to all regulated health professions across Australia.

Each time a practitioner applies to renew their registration, they must make a declaration that they have met the registration standards for their profession. Practitioner audits are an important part of the way that National Boards and AHPRA can better protect the public by regularly checking the declarations made by a random sample of practitioners. Audits help to make sure that practitioners are meeting the standards they are required to meet and enhance the trust of the community in the profession by providing important assurances that practitioners are meeting their professional and legal obligations.

Chinese medicine practice audit

The Board and AHPRA have started auditing Chinese medicine practitioners from December 2013. We will work with stakeholders to ensure smooth implementation of the audit process and will keep you informed of progress.

If you are selected for audit, you will receive an audit notice in the mail from AHPRA. It includes a checklist that outlines what supporting documentation is required to demonstrate that you meet the standard(s) being audited.

National Scheme news

Annual report published

The 2012/13 annual report of AHPRA and the National Boards of the 14 registered health professions was published on 1 November 2013. The report includes five times more data tables than the previous report, detailing the work of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) over the 12 months to 30 June 2013.

Each year, AHPRA and the National Boards report to the Ministerial Council on activities and performance. The annual report provides a national snapshot of the work and finances of the National Scheme and is tabled in the parliaments of each state and territory and the Commonwealth.

Our annual report explains the work we do, and accounts to the community, health practitioners and governments about how we do it.

There are now more than 590,000 health practitioners registered to practise in Australia – an increase in all professions and more than ever before – with one in 20 working Australians a registered health practitioner.

The National Scheme has a significant impact on the lives of all Australians – directly on all health practitioners who are registered to practise, and indirectly through our work in partnership with National Boards to protect public safety and maintain professional standards.

Highlights

Effective, proportionate and timely regulation is the constant goal of all National Boards. Every decision

National Boards make consciously focuses on striking the right balance between protecting public safety and facilitating access to health services.

The priority of the 2013 year was to improve the management of notifications in the National Scheme. AHPRA continues to work closely with National Boards to achieve this and other goals.

We have introduced better measurement and reporting systems and are committed to meeting agreed performance expectations for managing notifications.

Other highlights for the year include the smooth introduction of four new health professions, including Chinese medicine, into the National Scheme, bringing 40,000 additional practitioners into national regulation – many of them now registered for the first time.

The report also details our work in strengthening links with the community and the professions.

AHPRA in Numbers

592,470

health practitioners in 14 professions registered to practise in Australia

63,113

applications for registration across all professions

121,122

students studying to be health practitioners in Australia

60,053

criminal record checks

551,802

health practitioner renewal of registration applications

92%

of renewal applications received online

94%

of all nurses and midwives who renewed their registration completed the workforce survey

8,648

notifications received (including NSW)

33%

increase in mandatory notifications, varied across professions and states and territories

53%

about conduct

8%

about health

38%

about performance

1.3%

of the 592,470 practitioners notified about

54%

of notifications were about medical practitioners, who make up 16% of total practitioners

14%

increase in notifications lodged

Further information

The annual report is published on the AHPRA website under [Publications](#). It includes a detailed report – including data – for each National Board. For further information, contact communications@ahpra.gov.au.

Keep in touch with the Board

- Visit our website at www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au for news about the profession, information on the National Scheme and for registration standards, codes, guidelines, policies and fact sheets.
- Read the [National Board Communiqué](#) each month on the website: these publications inform everyone of the decisions made at the Board's monthly meeting.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the [Enquiries](#) link on the bottom of every page.
- For registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Prof. Charlie Xue, Chair, Chinese Medicine Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.

