

Media Release

25 February 2014

CHC Clarifies Complementary Medicine Regulation in Face of “Dodgy Labelling” Claims

In response to recent media articles in relation to the labelling of complementary medicines, the Complementary Healthcare Council reiterates the regulatory vigour of the complementary medicines industry in Australia.

A study, published in the *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, found that a number of herbal medicines available on the internet and over the counter appeared to have inconsistent ingredient concentrations listed between what was displayed on the website, the packaging, and the product listing on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG). The study authors concluded that these herbal medicines did not meet the legal requirements for their sale.

“The problem with this study is that even the most reputable, high quality herbal products on the market – on face value – may look to have inconsistencies, not due to nefarious business practices, but due to the different ways of expressing quantities of herbal ingredients,” said Mr Carl Gibson, chief executive officer of the Complementary Healthcare Council.

“The study authors failed to recognise that the expression of herbal extracts, as required on an ARTG entry, can be quantified differently than the expression on the label of the medicine or company website for the product. For example, the public summary on the ARTG may show the ‘input’ amount of the extract, while the label and website may show the ‘equivalent’ amount of the extract. Both forms of expression are correct and compliant with the regulations.”

“Importantly, these differences in expression of herbal extract do not equate to the consumer receiving more than the amount of herbal ingredient than that stated on the label nor would it mean any increase of risk to the consumer.”

“Australia is recognised as having one of the highest regarded and most tightly regulated systems in the world, with products manufactured under Good Manufacturing Practice, and the industry operating under strict safety and quality regulations set by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA),” said Mr Gibson.

Consumers need to be aware that products purchased online from overseas are not subject to the same regulations as those enforced in Australia, and therefore these purchases of complementary medicines should only be made on the recommendation of a qualified healthcare professional or from a reputable retailer.

“The complementary medicines industry in Australia is governed by strict quality and safety criteria and consumers can have confidence in the quality of herbal, vitamin or mineral medicine they chose for their health and wellbeing,” Mr Gibson went on to say.

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