

Educational and professional obstacles in the EU wide regulation of Chinese Herbal Products as Natural Medicines

The implementation of import and sale of Chinese Herbal Products under the EU Regulation of Natural Medicines is not only challenging in respect to different GMP standards, pharmaceutical identification problems and Quality Control Measures. The average knowledge of European therapists and physicians in Chinese Pharmacology as well as the average knowledge and training of pharmacists in the preparation of decoctions granulates and pills differ very much from China. Furthermore there are big differences in between the European countries of the spread of Chinese Medicine, the existing governmental regulations on education in Chinese Medicine and Pharmacology and professional requirements and licenses. Chinese Herbal Products are basically administered in European countries in two ways. The usage of Patent Medicines is widespread in Western European Countries whereas the individualized preparation of herbal mixtures as decoction or granulates and pills from raw herbal drugs dominates in Central European Countries. The lecture points out the positive and negative impact of the use of each group of Chinese Herbal products. Chinese Medicine is regarded in some countries as similar to Conventional Medicine and thus reserved to Conventional Medical Doctors and Pharmacists only. Other European Countries declared Chinese Medicine as Non-Medical. Thus the pharmaceutical products are prescribed or sold by specialized therapists, whereas Conventional Medical Doctors and Pharmacists refrain or object the use of Chinese Herbal Medicine. The lecture points out the structural and legal consequences of the regulation of Chinese Herbal Products under this differing professional situation.

Chinese medicine is rapidly gaining more publicity and recognition among the European countries since the 90's. Chinese medicine is meanwhile accepted by the European public as primary alternative therapeutic method. More and more therapists and doctors as well as pharmacists offer, prescribe and prepare and sell Chinese Herbal Products. There is anyway a huge lack of properly trained medical and pharmaceutical professionals. As a result Chinese herbs are being used, prepared and administered more and more by low-level trained pharmacists, physicians and therapists. The lecture outlines the present situation of professionals of Chinese Medicine and points on necessary legal requirements and restrictions to avoid abuse by other therapeutic professionals non-qualified in Chinese Medicine. The lecture gives an overview on the development structure in education, profession and legal status in the different European countries. Emphasis is given on the legal implications of the legalization of Chinese Herbal products. The possible dangers of implementing Chinese herbal products as OTC products are pointed out. A general step-by-step model of development of legal structures for Chinese herbal medicine is proposed, taking in account the needs of the public and the dangers of unregulated usage of Chinese Medicine. The model includes the outline of the necessary framework on evaluation and registration of Chinese Herbal products, sales regulations and restrictions, training requirements for therapists, physicians and pharmacists as well as a concept of a Code of Good Practice (CGP) for Chinese Medicine.