

**TRADITIONAL CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AUTHENTICATION CENTRE FOR EUROPE**

Leon, CJ1 Simmonds, M1 and Shaw, D2

1: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, UK

2: Medical Toxicology Unit, Guy's & St Thomas' Hospital Trust, London, UK.

Over the last 10 years, Europe has witnessed a rapid growth in Traditional Chinese Herbal Medicine (TCM). Practitioners number around 11,400, while the annual market is estimated to total S\$60 million¹.

However, little attention has been given to quality control issues in TCM, either herbal identity or quality. Yu et al. (1995)² report that as many as 10-25% of TCM herbs used in the UK are of doubtful identity and health concerns have been reported in both the academic^{3,4}, and popular press⁵.

Without recognised quality control standards and easy access to authentic reference material, the credibility of herbal TCM in the West stands to be undermined, patient safety compromised, and the health benefits of TCM may no longer be made accessible to those who wish to use it.

This presentation describes the development of an independent scientific Authentication Centre for TCM herbs at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The aim of the Centre is to address the issues described above and thereby provide consumer protection for those using herbal TCM in Europe.

Kew's specialist and wide-ranging identification skills will be described as tools for providing authentication services for the 4-500 species currently traded. Standardised authentication protocols resulting from this work will be detailed, together with the range of services planned. Users are likely to

include traders, manufacturers, practitioners, regulators, health authorities, conservation agencies, colleges and research workers. Progress in establishing this resource as a collaborative venture will be outlined.

By developing such a Centre, the first of its kind in Europe or the West, the RBG, Kew aims to address the concerns about QC relating to TCM and as a consequence provide consumer protection in this expanding field of phytotherapy.

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2: Yu et al. (1995). Pharmacognostical investigations on Traditional Chinese Medicinal herbs: identification of four herbs from the UK market. *J Pharm & Pharmacol.*, 47(2b): 1129.

3. Perharic, L, Shaw, D, Leon, C, De Smet, AGM, and Murray, SG (1995). Possible association of liver damage with the use of Chinese Herbal Medicine for Skin Disease. *Vet Human Toxicol*, 37(6): 562-566.

4. Patrick, H (1995). Traditional Chinese Medicine and public health: the Yin and the Yang. *J Roy Soc Medicine*, 88(9): 485-486.

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