

## Press Release

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### **Joint Press Release by The Pharmaceutical Society of Hong Kong and The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Hong Kong, School of Pharmacy, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Department of Pharmacology and Pharmacy, The University of Hong Kong**

On behalf of the professionals committed on assuring drug safety in Hong Kong, we wish to correct 4 misleading points concerning the training of pharmacists and the procedural changes in placing medication orders proposed by the 2009 Review Committee on Regulation of Pharmaceutical Products. These points were reported by South China Morning Post and The Standard on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

- 1) *"If the government doesn't provide a licensing exam and accreditation system, patients will lose faith in local businesses and the industry will die out,"*

The Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong SAR Government has an accreditation system. Both pharmacy programs at the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong went through a vigorous accreditation process. It is on this basis that graduates from both programs are exempt from the licensing examination upon satisfactory completion of a postgraduation 12-month supervised internship requirement. In line with international practice, licensing examination is required for anyone who completed their pharmacy training elsewhere from accredited programmes and wishes to practice in Hong Kong. This practice is also in line with the medical, dental, and nursing professional councils in Hong Kong.

- 2) *"About 60 pharmacy students a year graduate from the University of Hong Kong and Chinese University. They are hired without a standardised accreditation exam or apprenticing in pharmacies, which industry leaders see as a lack of quality control that is unfair to patients and falls short of world standards."*

All local graduates have to pass all the examinations of the accredited programmes and they have to successfully complete a 12-month internship training at accredited pharmacies.

- 3) *"[Using written orders] is a waste of time and human resources, and such a rule will not really guarantee patients' safety," said Dr Lee Chok-huen, of the Doctors' Union. "Phone calls are the best way to communicate and can avoid misunderstanding between pharmacies and medical clinics."*

Written orders are only needed when medical clinics order medicines from pharmacies or manufacturers as stock, this will improve patient drug safety by ensuring the audit trail is available. Phone calls cannot be audited; hence it cannot be regarded as good practice.

4) “..... *And internships do not cover independent pharmacies that are the bulk of the sector.*”

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board, there is currently no independent community pharmacy accredited by the Board to offer internship training nor has any independent pharmacy applied for accreditation.

In summary, the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance of Hong Kong has provided a framework to assure the quality of drugs, care provided by pharmacists, and formal education and training of students who aspire to be pharmacists in Hong Kong. The pharmacy profession always acts in the best interest of the public by adhering to the best practice that is inseparable from patient drug safety.

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