

## **Safe use of proprietary Chinese medicines**

Recently, the Department of Health (DH) has received a complaint from a member of the public relating to a cream suspected to be adulterated with undeclared western medicines prescribed by a local Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP). DH issued a press release about this case on 22 May 2012.

(Weblink: <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201205/22/P201205220438.htm>) .

As a follow-up action, samples of other types of cream were obtained from the CMP for chemical analysis. The Government Laboratory's results today detected the presence of:-

- (1) Dexamethasone, Ketoconazole, Clindamycin and Chloramphenicol in Laozhongyi Ointment; the first two ingredients would attain therapeutic levels if used in accordance with the CMP's instruction;
- (2) Dexamethasone, Ketoconazole, and Clindamycin in Acne Removing Cream; the first two ingredients would attain therapeutic levels if used in accordance with the CMP's instruction and,
- (3) Dexamethasone, Ketoconazole and Clindamycin in 'Qu Dou Shuang' (based on Pin-yin translation); the first two ingredients would attain therapeutic levels if used in accordance with the CMP's instruction.

Dexamethasone is a steroid and a prescription-only medicine. Taking dexamethasone for a long time, especially when in substantial dosage, can cause side effects such as moon face, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, muscle atrophy, peptic ulcer and even osteoporosis. Ketoconazole is a topical antifungal medicine commonly used for fungal infection of the skin. It can cause side effects such as itching, irritation and allergic reaction. Clindamycin is a topical antibiotic commonly used for acne. It can cause side effects such as burning, itching, dryness and skin peeling. Chloramphenicol is another topical antibiotic commonly used for

superficial skin infection. It may cause burning and hypersensitivity reaction. Thus, people who have used the cream should consult health-care professionals for advice.

Upon investigation, this CMP purchased the aforementioned cream from the Mainland through the internet. He did not prescribe any of them to his patient. DH is following up with Mainland authority regarding the authenticity of the concerned products.

So far DH has not received any adverse reports related to use of the concerned products.

It is common for people to purchase medicinal products including proprietary Chinese medicine (pCm) from sources outside Hong Kong, including the internet, for health maintenance or treatment of illnesses. The DH advises members of the public to purchase pCm only from credible retailers. If you feel unwell, please consult a healthcare professional at once. To protect your health, never purchase any pCm from an unknown source.

Please refer to this link for the approved list of pCm registration:

[http://cmchk.org.hk/pcm/eng/idx\\_listpcmsearch.htm](http://cmchk.org.hk/pcm/eng/idx_listpcmsearch.htm)

Chinese Medicine Division

Department of Health

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