

Severe threat to your herbal choices!

To our patients

The government is thinking about severely restricting what we can provide for you in this practice!

If you want to make sure you will have full access to quality herbal care from us please read the following. Then please write to your MP and consider responding to the on-line consultation document before 2nd November. This is the best way to make sure your choices and safety are protected!

Background

The Department of Health is currently consulting the public on the possibility of statutorily regulating herbal and acupuncture practitioners. After almost 10 years of government commitment to this important step in the public interest there is now a very real possibility that they will **not** go ahead.

Instead, the Government is now considering other options. This really is a case where regulation is important! Without it there will be a drastic reduction in public's access to high quality herbal remedies and in public protection against inferior and sometimes dangerous products.

The consultation has been made unnecessarily complex. However the Department of Health offers **two real choices**: either

1. **full statutory regulation** of practitioners to allow them to prescribe certain herbal medicines, or
2. a confusing range of alternatives (including 'licensing' or no regulation at all) that will mean that there will be **no one legally able to supply a wide range of high quality manufactured herbal medicines to the public**.

Some herbal products will be available as licensed or registered medicines – however these will be a very small proportion of the wide range used in traditional medicine. Only a statutorily regulated herbalist will be able to provide high quality manufactured products safely to their clients.

The following are key implications of the options being offered by the Government.

If practitioners ARE statutorily regulated

- The public will have a professional group able to deliver expert information and education about their use of herbal and traditional remedies.
- The public will have access to a wide range of high-quality herbal medicines from around the world that can be individually tailored to their needs.
- Doctors and other health professionals will gain important new partners in helping integrate the healthcare of the 50% of their patients who use herbal remedies.

If practitioners are NOT statutorily regulated

- The public will lose the opportunity to use a wide range of high quality herbal remedies.
- The majority of traditional remedies commonly used in China, India and other parts of the world will no longer be available except through unregulated internet or backstreet suppliers.
- The public will forever lose important professional expertise in ensuring standards in their use of herbal remedies and integration with their wider healthcare needs.
- A number of businesses that have specialised in manufacturing high quality herbal products for professional supply to the public will cease business.

There is only one option that will assure public safety and public choice, which will meet the recommendations of all the expert advice since the House of Lords reported on this issue in 2000, and which will satisfy the government's own conclusion up to now:

Herbalists need statutory regulation to provide for their patients!

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What to do next!

If you want to continue to have the full benefits of our practice please write to your MP and make the following points. *(it will help to use your own words where possible)*

“Are you aware

- “that the Department of Health is currently consulting on the future status of herbal practitioners and is floating a number of options that would have the effect of reducing the availability and quality of herbal medicines?”
(website http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_103567)
- “that one very possible outcome of this exercise is that constituents like myself will be denied safe and high quality health care of my choice?”

(if you wish to elaborate you could make something like the following points as well)

- “that if you have the opportunity of looking at the Consultation Document you might agree that it is extremely complicated and does not make clear the key choice that should be made, namely whether or not there will be ‘authorised health care professionals’ who can legally supply high quality herbal medicine to their clients (under Section 5.1 of the European Directive 2001/83/EC); that because of the enactment of this same Directive (including its amended Traditional Herbal Medicines Directive) only the option of **full statutory regulation** of herbal practitioners will ensure that the public have access to a wide range of safe and high quality herbal medicines”.

“Could you please make clear to Mr Mike O’Brien MP, Minister of State at the Department of Health that your constituent’s safe health care choices will be compromised if the Government (including devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) choose not choosing to statutorily regulate herbal practice.”

Please also consider responding the public Consultation Document yourself! Go to the website above and attempt to answer the questions. In many of the cases you might be tempted to say something like “*I do not understand this question but only statutory regulation of herbal practice will assure me of a good range of safe high-quality herbal medicines*”. This will be good enough – there is little point in having a public consultation if few people can understand the questions!