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Amendment to medical advert law angers Chinese herbalists

A REPRESENTATIVE of local Chinese herbalists yesterday asked for a prompt review of the Undesirable Medical Advertisements Ordinance.

International Association of Chinese Medicine general secretary Mr Choi Foong-kup told a seminar the ordinance threatened the development of Chinese medicine.

The amended ordinance, which came into effect last month, bans medical advertisements that lead people to believe, irrespective of how the ads are worded, that certain diseases listed in the ordinance can be cured.

Mr Choi said there was a large body of evidence that traditional Chinese medicine could treat certain diseases that Western medical practitioners claimed to be incurable.

In addition, Chinese and Western medicine had different terminology in describing diseases and symptoms, he said.

Mr Choi said it was inappropriate to apply the same yardstick to both Chinese and Western medical advertisements.

"In addition, the ordinance was drafted purely from the angle of Western medicine. It is unfair to the Chinese medical profession," he said.

Mr Choi asked the Chinese medical profession and the Government to run scientific studies of different Chinese herbs, to prove that the claims made by Chinese medical practitioners could be supported.

But, in the meantime, the Government should consult the Chinese medical profession and review the ordinance as soon as possible.

He said various Chinese medical organisations were seeking legal advice on the possibility of challenging the ordinance. But no action had yet been decided.