

Reproducing the Grace of Chinese Medicine with Paying a Visit to Record the Facts



Introduction

Medicines are used for saving life. Undoubtedly, a pharmacy should guarantee the safety and effectiveness of its products. To ensure the safety of users and raise the quality of medicine, the Department of Health has promoted GMP for traditional Chinese pharmacies, earning much support and validation. In 1987, it completed GMP implementation for Western medicine, condensed Chinese medicines (scientific Chinese medicines), Chinese medicines with the formation of Western medicines and animal medicines. It has gone further to push cGMP. As GMP has been applied even to animal medicines, Chinese medical pharmacies certainly should strictly be concerned with the quality of their products and the safety of the users. On May 2, 2000, the DOH put out a public notice, no. 89023780, to regulate the steps, time schedule and other matters about GMP implementation in all Chinese pharmacies (offering the plan for software and hardware improvement by February 28, 2002, completing software operations for the whole plant by February 29, 2004, and carrying out hardware installation by February 28, 2005). This phased approach has enabled DOH to grasp the actual progress of GMP application in every. With this announcement, GMP status became sine qua non for the survival of Western pharmacies and the Chinese pharmacies making condensed herbal medicine. This measure has greatly stimulated the growth of our nation's pharmaceutical industry and also improved the environment of pharmaceutical workers.

Besides, at present, most of the herbs used by Taiwan's Chinese pharmacies and by food processors are imported. As their origins of production and their species are different, it is difficult to regulate and identify them. The DOH tries to solve the problem through management

of the source. For this reason, the DOH Committee on Chinese Medicine and Pharmacy mapped out a five-year plan for constructing an environment for the use of traditional Chinese medicine. The Executive Yuan approved the principle of the plan, and the Legislative Yuan approved its 2004 budget. Now, the committee has established an “out-of-the-nation accreditation and in-the-nation quality control center” to make a deep-going understanding of the GAP and GMP herbs produced in the Chinese mainland and the mainland’s accreditation system. The information acquired will be used for applying GMP to all herbal pharmacies.

Since application of GMP to Chinese medicine was announced almost five years have gone. Now that the announced schedule expired on March 1, 2005, I, as chairman of this committee, should help the pharmacies to make transformation as soon as possible. For this reason, we have conducted several meetings to guide pharmacies to implement GMP and we have also taken other related measures in this end. On July 20 this year, the chairman began a travel schedule to call on the pharmacies for the whole nation and listening their wishes and examining the realities, so that we can help them carry out transformation. Since July 2004, we have held three large-scale meetings to guide Chinese pharmacies to carry out transformation.

After visiting the pharmacies, beginning on September 1, 2004, we held the second-wave meeting in cities and counties for pharmacies that were willing to carry out transformation. On the occasion, we organized for them to make face-to-face communication with health, construction, fire-fighting, and environmental protection officials. We opened a one-stop service window in the competent organization of a city or county to provide them with needed consultations.

I believe that the DOH’s GMP plan, if carried out satisfactorily, will constitute a milestone in the path toward quality guarantee of domestically made Chinese medicine. This represents the progress of the times, corporate conscience, and a concrete response to people’s increasing concern about the safety of medicines and their consciousness about health. I sincerely hope Chinese pharmacies will cooperate with us in massively burnishing their collective image and enhancing their international competition.