

Establishing Medication Safety Environment of Chinese Medicine in Taiwan



Introduction

In recent years, America, Germany, Japan, Korea, Australia and China all have begun to pay attention to herbal pharmaceutical industry. China, which has the advantage of the origin of production of medical herbs, is seeking to develop the industry through the establishment of regulations. WHO has also published articles about traditional/alternative medicine. It is not hard to see herbal medicines are becoming the rage in the world. According to WHO statistics, about 80 percent of world population uses herbal medicines and, therefore, herbal medicines are an emerging industry with the highest potential in the 21st century. Experts say that, before the world goes to regulate the raw material, planting, and quality of medical herbs, anyone who can control the specifications will control the source of quality raw material.

Because the ingredients of Chinese medicines are complicated and highly varied, homogeneous quality is difficult to get. For safety, users anticipate to raise the quality, to encourage more pharmacies to develop new products, and to establish a clinical evaluation environment. Therefore, the DOH Committee of Chinese Medicines and Pharmacy has pushed GMP in all plants, establishes a platform for standardized scientific evaluation, spurs the Chinese medical industry to renovate their technology, and cultivates professional talent. No delay can be tolerated in building a good environment. After the committee announced the implementation of the GMP system in 1982, to get GMP approval and accreditation has become the most important condition of pharmacies for survival. In Taiwan, there are 80 GMP Chinese pharmaceutical plants and 95 traditional Chinese pharmaceutical plants.

Now that the committee announced on May 2, 2000, the step and schedule for non-GMP plant to implement the GMP system, all those that failed to do so by March 1, 2005, would be deprived of their licenses and forbidden to carry on their business. At present, this committee is vigorously guiding these plants to complete the transformation and has held a number of explanatory meetings to make face-to-face communication with the plants to find out and straighten out their problems. To raise the standard of their herbal products, it is crucial to perfect the management for the source. For this reason, in 2003 this committee submitted to the Executive Yuan a “five-year plan for constructing an environment for safe use of traditional Chinese medicines and began to implement it in January 2004. We hope this will ensure safety for millions of herbal medicines using in Taiwan in every year. If the plan is carried out satisfactorily, it will mark a milestone in the insurance of the quality of traditional Chinese medicines. It is also a monument of the progress of the times, symbol of the industry’s conscience, and a concrete response to Taiwan people’s increasing concern about the safety of herbal medicines and their own health. At the same time, the measure can ensure the quality of the medicines made in this nation and maintain the technological maturity of the industry, improving the industry’s collective image and enhancing our nation’s international competitiveness. In addition, this will set the development of bio-technological industry and make Taiwan into a bio-technological island of herbal medicines and develop herbal medicines into a high-value mainstream industry.