

**Submission  
No 13**

## **THE PROMOTION OF FALSE OR MISLEADING HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION OR PRACTICES**

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Thursday 12 December 2013

The Committee  
Health Care Complaints Commission  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Email: [chccc@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:chccc@parliament.nsw.gov.au)  
Attention: Dr. Abigail Groves & Mr. Jason Arditi

Dear Dr. Groves & Mr. Arditi,

### **Re: Submission to the pending inquiry by the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission**

Our submission to the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission is to highlight important information relevant to the pending inquiry into '*promotion of unscientific health-related information or practices which may be detrimental to individual or public health*'.

The six salient points that will be considered by the Committee are pivotally important for all medical practitioners as its decisions directly influence the practical framework of Medicine, which is already practiced by increasing number of medical practitioners.

This '*Integrative*' approach of Medicine does not promote, thus receives no undisclosed financial incentives or additional professional recognition, whilst providing a *superb* practice of mainstream Medicine and acknowledging a highly ethical practice of Complementary Medicine in patients who have *chosen to integrate, or to complement*.

All stakeholders in health care that include governments of all levels, health care professionals, media, special interest groups and the wider public should realise that the principal issue here is not of '*Alternative (to) Medicine*', but of establishing a societal foundation for '*(True) Complementary Medicine*'.

### **Background**

This submission derives from our public posture as an *Integrative medical practice* while we work cohesively with Complimentary Medicine. Patients are increasingly looking for this approach to their healing and medical treatments.

We highly value and appreciate the input of Complimentary Medicine practitioners and organisations that adhere to a stringent code of ethics and conduct. They support the medical model and work with us upon patient's informed choice and consent.

Human beings are complex, thus their needs are varied and their treatment choices reflect these. Complimentary Medicine does not offer surgery, prescribe medications or specifically medically diagnose, but they do support the overall well being of the patient and bring a deeper understanding about themselves and their illness.

For instance, we have found some patients do better during and after surgery, when they have engaged and/or practice in Complementary Medicine treatments and techniques. They seem to be less anxious and tolerate better of the interventional procedures. Any doctor can tell you that a patient does better with loving support and lessened anxiousness.

There is increasing research that demonstrates that patients also do better when they have a strong personal sense of control and make their informed choices. It will be detrimental if we take away those choices. Our laws allow freedom of choice with their lifestyle, for instance, even with alcohol and cigarette smoking, where people use and abuse to great extremes to their detriment of their health.

We have addressed the relevant sections for your understanding and consideration, which is independent of other professionals and interested laypersons that share a common concern for the Committee.

**(a) The publication and/or dissemination of misleading health-related information that may cause general community mistrust of, or anxiety toward, accepted medical practice;**

Due to the traditionally diverse nature of non-mainstream Medicine, the traditional notion of Alternative Medicine is not well understood and perceived as '*mysterious*', even by the public that seek relief to their illness and disease.

Some eminent physicians and their affiliates have publicised strong personal opinions against '*unscrupulous*' practice of so-called Alternative Medicine, which is accused of '*disseminating misleading health-related information*'.

Not only their opinions promote public '*misperception, mistrust and anxiety*' themselves, their perceptions may have been clouded by the economics of funding Alternative Medicine modalities through the pre-existing health system infrastructure, biased views of the media, minority interest group(s) who holds personal grudges against those with different views, and resistance against the implementation of healing education in major university departments and research units.

By contrast, the integrity and ethics of the '*True*' Complementary Medicine has not been well defined for our health care system, except through the rare organisation(s), which have established a solid foundation for a transparent and accountable Code of Ethics and highly reputable standards of practitioner education.

The Committee should recognise that '*complementary*' herein refers to such organisation(s) working together with Medicine with the well-being and the safety of the public as the sole focus, thus there is no hidden intent to mislead the public.

**(b) The publication and/or dissemination of information that encourages individuals or the public to unsafely refuse preventative health measures, medical treatments, or cures;**

Complimentary Medicine modalities support widely-accepted preventative health measures: dietary needs, minimise the use of alcohol, modify with a view to eliminate cigarette smoking, minimise fatty foods, decrease the use of high sugar content foods and drinks, strongly advising clients/patients to continue to take prescribed medication until their doctor advises them to cease and consult a doctor if there is anything that possibly requires medical attention. All of these support and encourage the patient to adhere to medical requirements, therefore support and encourage what is presented medically.

A major criticism against the non-mainstream Medicine has been the lack of widescale academic data, especially from the perspective of a large-scale cohort longitudinal or case study data, and randomised controlled trial. However, all stakeholders involved in health care also understand that a widespread data for '*Evidence-Based Medicine*' (EBM) is lacking within our own field of Scientific and Modern Medicine.

Reputable healing organisation(s) with their strict Code of Ethics and professional standards do not discourage '*preventative health measures, medical treatments, or even cures*' but are highly respectful of what Medicine can offer to the community.

They also reinforce a holistic model of health care through the General Practitioners, Medical Specialists and allied health professionals, given the limitation of Medicine for many emerging chronic illnesses and diseases.

**(c) The promotion of health-related activities and/or provision of treatment that departs from accepted medical practice which may be harmful to individual or public health**

There are reputable healing practitioners and their associations that provide the highest level of integrity and public safety through their healing modalities. These modalities are gentle, practical, easily reproducible by certified practitioners and supported by increasing number of client reports. These facts cannot be ignored and warrant consideration for long-term support within the health care system.

The core emphasis of what these healing practitioners do is through the very fundamental element of what '*Healing*' truly means. **Healing** refers to everything we do in our lifestyle that engender health (or illness) behaviour from the very time we are born until the time we take our last breath. How we eat, walk, look after ourselves and relate to others are important determinants of how we respond to the physiological stresses and different energies that ultimately affect the healing of the human body.

As **Integrity** is intimately linked to personal responsibility of every individual to heal what is truly right for his or her body, organisation(s) that emphasise integrity and Code of Ethics do not harm or depart from what is acceptable within the conventional medical practice.

**(d) The adequacy of the powers of the Health Care Complaints Commission to investigate such organisations or individuals;**

In the US, there is a dedicated federal government department of the National Institute of Health (NIH) that is fully committed to the Alternative and Complementary Medicine, such

as the National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM). As yet, we lack such a capacity to commit our legislative efforts.

Our own Australian Medical Association in August 2012 has even formulated a guideline on Alternative Medicine that we as doctors should act as informed professional consultants to wisely guide our patients within the highest level of ethical and legal responsibility accepted within the practice of Medicine.

The Health Care Complaints Commission should consider appropriate resources to help the public discern the differences between the Traditional Alternative Medicine (e.g. acupuncture) and Complementary Medicine (e.g. esoteric healing modalities), and also to outline the framework of the highest integrity and reputable professional standards of the rare organisation(s), which works together with mainstream Medicine.

**(e) The capacity, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the Health Care Complaints Commission to take enforcement action against such organisations or individuals; and**

The Health Care Complaints Commission has stringent measures for medical practitioners. Due to the complexity and diversity of Medicine, we feel that the current measures for Medicine are adequate for Complimentary Medicine organisations. An important capacity we would recommended for the Committee is the practical implementation of a deeper understanding of **Integrity** for healing and medical practitioners.

For example, patients are advised to change their lifestyle such as in smoking cessation by some health care professionals who themselves continue to smoke. Thus, we allow patients to receive treatments through practitioners who do not live the core principle of integrity either in Medicine or the current form of Alternative Medicine. The Committee should acknowledge that there is Complementary Medicine practitioners and their organisations that centre their healing practice to integrity that is openly transparent to the public.

Following from the previous response, the Health Care Complaints Commission should also consider a formal evaluation of the professional and ethical standards of the reputable healing practitioner(s) and organisation(s) rather than *'to take enforcement action'* based on the reports of a small minority who have adopted a one-sided perspective.

**(f) Any other related matter.**

We as a society must not take away the **informed choice** of *'True'* Complementary Medicine from our patients and/or doctors who are willing to understand and integrate their use alongside the highest practice of Medicine.

Our collective responsibility should develop a loving guideline and policy that guarantees an unbiased representation of Complementary Medicine, so both Complementary Medicine and mainstream Medicine can collaborate together within the integrative framework of corporate social responsibility and health care governance.

As there is no truly reliable scientific data or way to research true care for patients and its impact on their health, there is a great scope for qualitative research and education in Integrative model of Medicine, considering that patients often say they feel much better just talking to and seeing the doctor, so surely there is something in the loving care of

another practitioner in between visits. Continued evaluation of Complementary Medicine is only one aspect of how Medicine can continue to evolve to help the public in an increasingly complex health care system, which is challenged by chronic illness and disease.

Our future generation of patients and doctors are dependent upon the Committee's initiatives and wisdom, which are beyond the perspectives of any specific interest groups or biased media perspectives.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you. We are very transparent in our approach and would be honored to assist Government if possible.

With love & truth,

*Breathing love back into the Lungs*



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