

Media Release



6 March 2013

For immediate release

Cancer Council Alarmist on Complementary's

The Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) is disappointed at the alarmist position the Cancer Council of Australia has taken on complementary medicines and alternative therapies, as recently outlined in their position statement.

“The CHC is concerned this alarmist statement may cause cancer sufferers and general consumers to stop using legitimate medicines, and treatments, contradicting the Cancer Council position of respecting the right of individuals to seek information and their decision to use such medicines and therapies”, said Dr Wendy Morrow, Executive Director of the CHC.

“Complementary medicines listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) are restricted to indications and claims relating to health maintenance, health enhancement or non-serious, self-limiting conditions. Generally, they may not refer to a serious form of a disease, disorder or condition, or indicate they are for treatment or prevention. Complementary medicine products claiming to cure cancer should be immediately referred to the TGA. I am surprised the Cancer Council do not know this”, said Dr Morrow.

“The Cancer Council have done a good job to confuse cancer sufferers, despite their own research identifying an Australian study that claims that 90% of cancer patients using complementary medicines and therapies reported perceived benefits such as improved quality of life, and, reduced symptoms and side effects”.

“The CHC supports the right of consumers to make informed decisions about their medicine choices and treatment, as does the Cancer Council. We encourage all consumers to speak openly with their medical practitioner about what their treatment options are and we encourage doctors to be open, and non-judgmental as does the Cancer Council”, said Dr Morrow.

The CHC supports calls for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to focus research in the complementary medicine sector as highlighted in our submission to the Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research in Australia.

“There is a good level of credible evidence published in mainstream medical journals to support the efficacy of many complementary medicines, however, more needs to be done and published”, said Dr Morrow.

It is in Australia's best interests to invest in health and medical research that provides outcomes for preventative health measures, and maximises a return on government investment¹.

1 <http://www.chc.org.au/Resources/Documents/Submissions/CHC%20Submission%20Strategic%20Review%20of%20the%20NHMRC%20March%202012%20%282%29.pdf>

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The Facts about Complementary Medicines regulation in Australia

- Complementary medicines are assessed for quality and safety in line with the Australian Government risk-based framework and include key areas of regulatory oversight such as the licensing and audit of manufacturers, pre-market assessment of products, and a range of post-market activities. Registered complementary medicines are assessed individually for quality, safety and efficacy².
- Listed medicines may be supplied only if they contain active ingredients permitted under Schedule 4 of the Regulations. These are substances that have been evaluated by the TGA and found to be of low risk.
- To be consistent with their use in low-risk medicines, some ingredients are subject to conditions. These include requirements for advisory or warning statements on product labels, limits on plant part and/or preparations, quantitative limits, or substance-related restrictions.
- Complementary medicines must be manufactured under the same code of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) as other medicines (<http://www.tga.gov.au/industry/cm-basics-regulation-overview.htm>).
- A complementary medicine is defined by the TGA as a therapeutic good consisting wholly or principally of one or more designated active ingredients each of which has a clearly established identity and a traditional use (<http://www.tga.gov.au/industry/cm-basics-regulation-overview.htm>).

For Media Interviews contact

CHC, Executive Director

Dr Wendy Morrow 0407 072 151

CHC Marketing and Communications

Richard Arranz 0408 388 015
richard.arranz@chc.org.au or prmedia@chc.org.au

www.chc.org.au

² <http://www.tga.gov.au/industry/cm-basics-regulation-overview.htm>