

**Title:** The Consequences for Chinese Herbal Medicine of Prohibiting Mineral Substances from the Chinese Materia Medica in the United Kingdom

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**Abstract**

The use of minerals contained in the Chinese Materia Medica is prohibited in the UK by definition of the Medicines Act of 1968, which defines a 'herbal remedy' as one 'made up of plant ingredients.' Although some countries, notably China, Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong, have regulatory processes in place that oversee the sale and practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine, studies have identified the continued presence and use of minerals containing heavy metals and pharmaceutical drugs in TCHM which presents a risk to the public in their own locale and to some extent, internationally. Rigorous enforcement of the law pertaining to Good Manufacturing Practice in manufacturing countries has also identified problems in the quality control of herbal products. These factors, coupled with a lack of UK and EU legislation pertaining to the professional identity of herbalists and its unregulated herbal market present further problems of public safety. With the Traditional Herbal Medicines Product Directive becoming law in October 2005 and eminent UK governmental legislation establishing professional identity guidelines, it is envisioned that public safety will be enhanced. As the Chinese herbal profession and its Materia Medica become well established, the profession may petition for the legal right to use certain minerals deemed safe for human consumption. The next step in this unfolding process is the release of the 'Foster Review,' which may have far reaching consequences for all health care professionals, and most likely will recommend a statutory council solely for non-medical healthcare practitioners.