

**Towards Integrative Health Care.
The perspectives and experiences of Chinese
Medicine Practitioners (CMPs) and General
Medical Practitioners (GPs)**

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Nga Chong Lisa CHENG declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of PhD, in the Faculty of Science at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. The content of the project is the result of work that has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

Australia is a country with multiculturalism. The collaboration between General Medical Practitioners (GPs) and Chinese Medicine Practitioners (CMPs) is vital for the holistic management and safety for patients who utilise both medical systems. This study aims to identify the differences in perspective and beliefs of GPs towards CMPs and their practices. This research will focus on New South Wales region, especially Sydney as the setting for the research. This research study consists of seven phases.

According to the literature review, there was a gap in knowledge concerning communication between CMPs and GPs. One study reviewed found that young GPs in Hong Kong have a negative bias against CMPs and believed them to be unscientific. There were scant researches that has been undertaken and no in-depth investigation on the perspectives and beliefs held by both the GPs and CMPs undertaken in the Australian environment where Chinese Medicine (CM) is registered under the national law.

Drawing on the literature review, a quantitative study was developed to obtain relevant information. According to the survey's finding, there were several questions where the two groups have different responses. CMPs believed that CM has a role in contributing to good health and wellbeing and had a high safety profile, whilst most GPs were impartial concerning the contribution of CM to good health and wellbeing. Only 57% of GPs believed that CM was fairly safe but 37% were unsure regarding CM's safety profile. Collaboration between the CMPs and GPs was believed to be beneficial by both groups. Nevertheless, CMPs would like GPs to make increasing use of referral and support the patient's request, however only 43% of GPs were willing to make the referral to CMPs.

The qualitative study (focus group) identified five main themes behind this lack in communication. These included 1) lack of knowledge of the legitimacy of CM, 2) lack of awareness of any proven

effectiveness, 3) observation of the negative effects, 4) belief that patients should consult a GP prior to attending a CMP, and 5) reluctance to referral to a CMP due to legal responsibilities and liabilities.

This study had a relatively small sample size. However, it is anticipated that future studies will extend to a wider community and sample. Regulation of the referral process could also potentially address this communication gap. The ultimate aim for both groups of health care practitioners is to provide patient-centred care and high level of safety.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CAM	Complementary and Alternative Medicine
CM	Chinese Medicine
CMs	Chinese Medicine Practitioners
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPs	General Medical Practitioners
NRAS	National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
TCM	Traditional Chinese Medicine
WHO	World Health Organisation