



**Chinese Medicine Council
of New Zealand
新西兰中医管理局**

Consultation on Review of Advertising Standards

22 May 2026

Purpose

The Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (the Council) is consulting with practitioners, stakeholders, and members of the public on proposed revisions to the Council's Advertising Standard and Advertising Standard – Guidance.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek feedback on whether the proposed revisions:

- are clear and easy to understand,
- appropriately support public safety and trust,
- reflect contemporary advertising practices (including digital and social media), and
- provide practical guidance for practitioners.

Following consultation, the Council will consider all feedback received before making a final decision and publishing any approved updates on the Council's website.

Introduction

The Council is a Responsible Authority under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act). One of the Council's functions is to set standards that protect the health and safety of the public and guide professional practice.

Advertising plays an important role in how members of the public choose health services. Advertising that is unclear, misleading, or overly promotional can create unrealistic expectations, cause harm to people who may be vulnerable, and undermine trust in practitioners and the profession.

The Council routinely reviews its standards to ensure they remain current, clear, and fit for purpose. Advertising standards are typically reviewed on a regular cycle (approximately every three years).

This review has also been informed by updates to Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) codes and guidance, which apply across the health sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Since the Advertising Standard was last approved, advertising practices have changed significantly, particularly through the use of social media, online platforms, and user-generated content.

Current Standards and Documents Under Review

The Council is consulting on the following documents:

- the Advertising Standard (reviewed),
- the Advertising Standard – Guidance (expanded and updated), and
- supporting practitioner resources developed to assist with understanding and applying the revised documents.

The Advertising Standard sets minimum requirements for advertising by Chinese medicine practitioners. The Guidance expands on the Standard by providing explanations and practical examples.

3.1 Supporting practitioner resources

The supporting practitioner resources include:

- an easy-read cover sheet, explaining the purpose of the review and what has and has not changed; and

- an Advertising self-review checklist (practitioner resource), designed as a voluntary tool to help practitioners review their own advertising.

These supporting resources do not create new standards or requirements and are not audit or enforcement tools. They are intended to support clarity, accessibility (including for practitioners for whom English is not a first language), and good professional governance.

Proposed Amendments

The proposed amendments focus on improving clarity and consistency, rather than introducing new or unexpected rules. Key areas include:

- I. **Implied therapeutic claims**
Clearer expectations that advertising must not directly or indirectly imply a therapeutic purpose, including through wording, imagery, testimonials, hashtags, emojis, or overall context.
- II. **Advertising a health service vs a method of treatment**
Expanded guidance on the distinction between describing a health service and implying treatment, cure, or specific outcomes, including the use of “support” language.
- III. **Testimonials, reviews, and user-generated content**
Clearer guidance on practitioner responsibility for advertising content on platforms they control, including reviews and comments once they become aware of them.
- IV. **Social media and digital advertising**
Additional guidance on how social media features (such as reposts, links, hashtags, and emojis) can constitute advertising claims.
- V. **Vulnerable audiences**
Strengthened emphasis on social responsibility and the need for particular care when advertising may reach people experiencing distress, mental health concerns, chronic illness, fertility- or pregnancy-related concerns, or limited health literacy.
- VI. **Titles, qualifications, and specialist wording**
Clearer guidance on the use of professional titles (including “Dr”), qualifications, and wording that may imply specialist status.
- VII. **Evidence, funding, and traditional knowledge**
Clarification that evidence, clinical rationale, ACC or insurer funding, or references to traditional knowledge do not permit advertising claims that are otherwise prohibited.

What has not changed

The core principles of the Advertising Standard remain the same. In particular:

- Advertising must be truthful, balanced, and not misleading.
- Practitioners must not claim or imply that their services treat, cure, fix, or guarantee outcomes.
- Practitioners remain responsible for advertising content they control.
- Advertising must be socially responsible and culturally respectful.

The review does not change scopes of practice, clinical standards, or enforcement thresholds.

How to Submit your Feedback

The Council welcomes feedback on the proposed revisions, including:

- whether the documents are clear and understandable,
- whether the guidance and examples are practical and helpful,
- whether there are areas that require further clarification, and
- any unintended impacts the Council should consider.

Submissions can be made **by email** to the Council's Registrar –

Lindsey.Pine@chinesemedicinecouncil.org.nz

Deadline for submissions: 5pm, 3 July 2026.

A summary of consultation feedback and the Council's decisions will be published following the conclusion of the consultation.

This consultation document should be read alongside the draft Advertising Standard, Advertising Guidance, and supporting practitioner resources.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Current Advertising Standard and Advertising Standard – Guidance

Appendix 2 – Proposed revised Advertising Standard and Advertising Standard – Guidance (Draft 2026)

Appendix 3 – Supporting practitioner resources (information only)

- Easy-read cover sheet
- Advertising self-review checklist (practitioner resource)