



**CODE OF ETHICS
AND STANDARDS OF**

**PRACTICE FOR
TRADITIONAL
MEDICINE
PRACTITIONERS IN GHANA**

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FOREWORD

Over the years various governments have contributed in diverse ways to the development of Traditional Medicine in Ghana. In recent times Ghana has supported several international resolutions on development of Traditional Medicine in member countries of the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the African Union (AU).

The overall policy direction in Ghana is to integrate Traditional Medicine into the national healthcare delivery system through partnership with the private sector and the existing medical system, to deliver quality care or service to the people.

The practice of a profession like Traditional Medicine requires discipline, knowledge, dedication, commitment and skill.

Today's Traditional Medicine cannot operate in the same way as our forefathers did in view of global resurgence of interest in Traditional Medicine. During their time the discipline, knowledge, and skills were controlled through a religious system and strong social norms. The long period without regulation in Traditional Medicine practice, within the social dynamics of secularisation, modernization and urbanization, has introduced elements into the practice that need to be streamlined through regulatory mechanisms, one of which is the Code of Ethics.

This document has therefore been designed to bridge the gap. It will augment the influence of religion as a social or self-regulatory control mechanism in the practice of traditional medicine. The overall objective is to improve the quality of traditional medicine practices within the context of training and institution of professionalism.

This document has been grouped into four sections as follows:

- * Traditional Medicine Practitioners in relation to their chosen profession
- * Traditional Medicine Practitioners in relation to their patients
- * Traditional Medicine Practitioners in relation to their colleagues
- * Traditional Medicine Practitioners in relation to the public

Thus, the Code of Ethics is to serve as an instrument expressing the standards of practice, moral discipline and competence required from all Traditional Medicine Practitioners in Ghana.

Infringement of the code of ethics shall render the Traditional Medicine Practitioner liable to disciplinary action as stated under the Traditional Medicine Practice Act 575 and any subsequent legislation.

Although this document is being issued as a directive policy, the Traditional Medicine Practice Council shall reserve the right to revise the provisions of this Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice from time to time.


HON. DR. KWAKU AGYEPPONG
MINISTER OF HEALTH

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice is another evidence of Government's commitment to developing Traditional Medicine. Compliance with these principles and tenets of this document will in no doubt ensure discipline, promote professionalism and improve the quality of service.

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CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS IN GHANA

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

Our forefathers developed Traditional Medicine relative to their understanding of nature, the Creator, divinities and ancestral spirits (metaphysical world).

Thus, it is believed that:

- * Life involves the operation of laws.
- * Traditional Medicine practice is holistic integrating social ethics, religion and moral values.
- * Man is made up of the mind (soul), body and spirit.
- * The well being of a man entails harmony between the body, mind, soul and spirit and maintenance of a good relationship with the ancestral world and external environment.
- * The health of a man has a link with the Creator, Divinities and Ancestral spirits.
- * Disease causation has both spiritual and physical dimensions (i.e. Psychosomatic).
- * Disease may also be caused by an infection as dictated by modern theory.
- * Plants, animals and inanimate objects have got certain endowed healing properties.

Other Beliefs are:

- * Traditional Medical Care, since time immemorial is knowledge from the Creator revealed through apprenticeship, observation, vision, dreams and spiritual possessions.

Traditional Medicine is therefore defined as the knowledge, skills and practice of a holistic health care, recognised and accepted for its role in the maintenance of health and the treatment of diseases which is based on indigenous theories, beliefs and experiences that are handed down from generation to generation (Manila, WHO, 2000).

The WHO 2002 statement defines Traditional Medicine as the sum total of the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, believes,

experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the diagnoses, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness.

The TMPC Act 575 of Ghana, defines traditional medicine as " Practices based on beliefs and ideas recognized by the community to provide health care by using herbs and other naturally occurring substances."

INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine use at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of health services is widespread in Ghana. Indeed in almost every household in Ghana traditional medicine products are used for preventive and curative health.

In Ghana today, according to a recent census, there are over 20,000 Traditional Medicine Practitioners located in our rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Most of them have acquired their skills through inheritance and apprenticeship. Formal training programmes have been organised for some of them to improve their professional skills and competence. However, many of them operate with very little or no formal training.

The objective of the Ministry of Health is to integrate Traditional Medicine into mainstream health delivery system. It has therefore become part of the policy of government to assist Traditional Medicine Practitioners to raise their standard of practice.

As a necessity, it is expected that any profession must satisfy four (4) basic requirements namely:

- * An intellectual discipline and standard of knowledge
- * A representative body of practitioners
- * A regulatory body backed by Law
- * Standards of conduct and practice

The standards of conduct as part of code of ethics binds the practitioners and represent the standards of behaviour or good practice. Ethical conduct is therefore good conduct and ethical practice is good practice.

In providing service as healthcare providers, the Traditional Medicine Practitioners should avoid any act of omission or commission which would compromise the services provided by the practitioners. Hence this document serves as one of the regulatory instruments for the practice of Traditional Medicine in Ghana.

It is against this backdrop that this Code of Ethics for Traditional Medicine Practitioners has been developed.

OBJECTIVE

The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice is aimed at instilling discipline and professionalism into traditional medicine practice, thus serving as a regulatory instrument for traditional medicine practice in Ghana.

SCOPE

This document is applicable to Traditional Medicine Practitioners who in this context refers to Herbalists, Bonesetters, Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), Circumcisers (Wanzams), Spiritualists, Okomfo, Bosomfo, Mallams, Hunua, Prophets, Bokors, Amegashies and others to be determined by the Traditional Medicine Practice Council.

Similarly, premises/practices refer to factories, clinics, herbal medicine shops, vehicles registered for the sale of Traditional Medicine Products and others as stated in the Act 575 for the regulation of Traditional Medicine Practice in Ghana.

Council- refers to the Traditional Medicine Practice Council.

Professional misconduct refers to any complaint against a practitioner that contravenes any of the provisions of the Act 575 , the Code of Ethics or criminal code of Ghana..

SECTION 1: TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS IN RELATION TO THEIR CHOSEN PROFESSION

Article 1: Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall be required to register with the Traditional Medicine Practice Council to be licensed to practice.

Article 2: Traditional Medicine Practitioner shall be registered and licensed to practice if he/she has never been:

- (a) Convicted of an offence under any law of the nation relating to Traditional Medicine Practice.
- (b) Guilty of professional misconduct.
- (c) Declared a lunatic or mentally deranged by board of council.
- (d) and if he/she possesses testimonials from person designated by the council or the Act 575.

Article 3: Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall also pass a Professional Qualifying Examination designed to suit the individual in terms of type of practice, literacy and language.

Article 4: A Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall be required to have the premises licensed by the council.

- Article 5:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall be competent and operate within the laws of the land.
- Article 6:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall regularly upgrade their knowledge through approved continuing education programmes.
- Article 7:** (a) Traditional Medicine Practitioner shall promote the health and well being of the patient and the general public.
(b) He/She shall refrain from any act that He/She knows may adversely affect the patient's health.
- Article 9:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall at all times provide direct supervision of their apprentices and/ or assistants.
- Article 10:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall immediately report any observed undesirable reactions and side effects noted in the course of the treatment to the National Centre for Pharmacovigilance or any other body as determined by the council.
- Article 11:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall limit their practice only to areas within their registered professional competence. Cases beyond their competence shall be referred to the appropriate institution/practice.
- Article 12:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall provide information on his practice/product to the public only in conformity with FDB Law PNDCL 305B.
- Article 13:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall always respond favourably to reasonable requests to provide Traditional Medical care or products in an emergency.
- Article 14:** Traditional Medicine Practitioner shall display in the establishment, his/her own name and the names of other Traditional Medicine Practitioners employed.

- Article 15:** Traditional Medicine Practitioner shall avoid collusion with any other person(s) for illegal financial gains to the detriment of client or employee.
- Article 16:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall refrain from all acts of indiscipline including drunkenness, smoking, immorality, abuse of drugs and pilfering in the course of performing their duties.
- Article 17:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall neither prescribe any medicine(s) made from or containing parts of the human body or organs nor indulge in human sacrifices.
- Article 18:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall accept compensation only in cash and in kind excluding human beings, their parts, sex and other socio-culturally unacceptable and illegal forms of practices.
- Article 19:** Traditional Medicine Practitioner shall exclude sexual activity as a form of treatment of any ailment whatsoever, either physical or spiritual. He/She shall also avoid sexual harassment in the course of duty. Clients shall be exposed or undressed in a manner deemed decent only in the presence of a relative or chaperon.
- Article 20:** Preparations used shall be done under the licence and supervision of a qualified and registered Traditional Medicine Practitioner. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) shall be strictly adhered to, in order to ensure quality.
- Article 21:** Herbal centres, shops and clinics shall be inspected regularly without prior notice. Traditional Medicine practitioners shall therefore always admit and cooperate with any person(s) authorised to do so.
- Article 22:** Certified Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall at all times remain on the premises during working hours to ensure supervision.

- Article 23:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall be required to seek approval from the Food and Drugs Board before advertising traditional medicine products. Practices and practitioners self or name should not be advertised.
- Article 24:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall make claims that can be proven or supported with evidence.
- Article 25:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall make available for sale or dispensing to patients, Traditional Medicines and other appliances that are labelled and unadulterated or that he/she has no reason to doubt its quality.
- Article 26:** Traditional Medicine Products shall be of natural substances of plant, animal or mineral origin and shall not be mixed/combined with orthodox medicines/pure chemicals during preparation or manufacturing.
- Article 27:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall notify a coroner through local police of all deaths occurring in the premises according to the laws of the land.
- Article 28:** Traditional Medicine Practitioner in-charge of an institution (Clinic, Hospital) shall submit Death Reports on all deaths occurring in the premises to the nearest Government Health Facility.
- SECTION 2: TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS IN RELATION TO THEIR PATIENTS**
- Article 29:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall be required to disclose their identity and that of other persons including students, trainees and ancillary workers who may handle clients.
- Article 30:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall inform/educate clients of relevant policies and regulations in their facility.

- Article 31:** (a) Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall maintain safe and hygienic environment in order to promote good health.
(b) They shall only use sterilised cutting or piercing instruments on each client. All cutting instruments shall be re-sterilized or disposed off.
- Article 32:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall be required to inform or explain all service charges and all forms of anticipated expenditure to the patient prior to treatment.
- Article 33:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall provide privacy to the patient during consultation, examination and treatment. In cases where it is necessary to use the patient or his/her case notes for teaching and conferences, the consent of the patient must be sought.
- Article 34:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall ensure confidentiality of information obtained about the patients and such information shall not be disclosed to a third party without the patient's consent or the person entitled to act on his/her behalf except where such information is required by law.
- Article 35:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall inform/educate all clients fully of their conditions, management, as well as procedures involved in the treatment, which they intend to administer, and the possible risks involved, except in emergency situations when the client is unable to make a decision and the need for treatment is urgent.
- Article 36:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall be required to attend to clients below 18 years of age only when accompanied by responsible person(s) except in an emergency or when treatment is urgent.

- Article 67:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners or their agents involved in harvesting shall observe sustainable harvesting techniques and ensure environmental friendliness, re-vegetation and re-forestation.
- Article 68:** Any training programme organized for the purpose of accreditation must be done with prior approval of the council.
- Article 69:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall always report any unlawful obstruction of their approved duties by an unauthorised person(s) to the council.
- Article 70:** Traditional Medicine Practitioners, their assistants or staff shall abide by this Code of Ethics. Any infringement shall attract disciplinary action as laid down by the council or the Act 575.