MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS BOARD

SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE
SAFEGUARDING EVERY DAY

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28 May 2026

To all registered TCM practitioners

JOINT MOH-TCMPB-SPF CIRCULAR ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS (EXEMPTION) ORDER 2018 AND CHANGES TO THE MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENT REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This circular reminds all registered Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners ("**TCMPs**") of their statutory obligations under the Massage Establishments ("**ME**") (Exemption) Order 2018 ("**ME Exemption Order**") and provides an update on upcoming changes to the ME regulatory regime.

2. The Police have detected cases of persons who are not registered under the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Act 2000 ("**TCMPA**") and do not hold a valid practising certificate (referred to as "**non-TCMPs**") or do not have a valid ME licence administering massages to customers in TCM clinics. In some instances, there were MEs which were disguised as TCM clinics allowing non-TCMPs working within their premises to provide unlicensed massage services and/or engage in indecent acts with customers. Police investigations into the persons and errant operators involved are ongoing.

3. MOH and TCMPB take a serious view of such conduct, which brings disrepute to the TCM profession. Facilitating vice activities is a serious criminal offence, and registered TCMPs are reminded that lending their names to establishments used for such activities or engaging non-TCMPs to provide unlicensed massage services — whether knowingly or through wilful blindness — will not be tolerated. Registered TCMPs found to have done so can expect severe disciplinary action, including suspension or cancellation of their registration.

Ministry of Health, Singapore
College of Medicine Building
16 College Road
Singapore 169854
TEL (65) 6325 9220
FAX (65) 6224 1677
WEB www.moh.gov.sg

ME Exemption Order — Conditions That Must Be Met

4. Under Paragraph 3(a)[1] of the ME Exemption Order, a premise is exempted from holding an ME licence only if the TCMP registered under Section 14 of the TCMPA, with a valid practising certificate under Section 17, personally administers the massage himself or herself.

5. The ME Exemption for registered TCMPs is narrow and specific. It does not extend to situations where massage services are administered by any other person who is not a registered TCMP.

TCM Clinics with Non-TCMPs Administering Massage

6. If any massage services at the premises are provided by non-TCMPs — whether on a part-time or full-time basis — the business operator must apply for and obtain an ME licence from the Police. This requirement applies regardless of the proportion of massage services provided by non-TCMPs, and regardless of whether the non-TCMP is employed by the TCM clinic or is an independent operator co-located at the same premises with the TCM clinic. Individuals found guilty of carrying on a business of providing massage services in an establishment for massage without a valid licence under Section 5(1) of the Massage Establishments Act 2017 ("**ME Act**") are liable to a maximum fine of $10,000 and/or a maximum imprisonment term of up to two years. Repeat offenders are liable to a maximum fine of $20,000 and/or a maximum imprisonment term of five years.

7. Any registered TCMP involved in the commission of the offence will be referred to TCMPB for disciplinary action.

Do Not Lend Your Name Where You Do Not Practise

8. Registered TCMPs must not lend their names to any establishment where they do not personally practise.

9. Using a registered TCMP's name to satisfy the exemption without the registered TCMP personally administering massage breaches TCMPB's Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines ("**ECEG**") and will be referred to TCMPB for disciplinary action.

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[1] Paragraph 3(a) of the ME Exemption Order states:

Premises at which massage is by registered persons

3. Any premises used, or which are represented as being used, or intended to be used, for the reception or treatment of individuals seeking massage administered only by the following individuals are exempt from the provisions of the Act:

a) an individual who is registered under section 14 of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Act 2000 and has in force a practising certificate issued under section 17 of that Act.

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Past Disciplinary Cases

10. To illustrate the serious consequences of non-compliance, TCMPB sets out below two disciplinary cases involving registered persons who have breached the ME Act. These cases have concluded and are published on the TCMPB website.

a) Case 1: A registered acupuncturist was convicted in Court on two separate occasions of operating a ME without a licence. In the first conviction, he was convicted of two counts, with two further counts taken into consideration, and sentenced to a fine of $1,600 by the State Courts. Subsequently, he was charged with 57 counts of the same offence, convicted of 24 counts, with the remaining 33 counts taken into consideration, and sentenced to a fine of $24,000. He also made false declarations to TCMPB in practising certificate renewals by declaring that he had not been convicted of any criminal offences, notwithstanding both of his convictions mentioned above.

   Following his convictions and upon conclusion of TCMPB's disciplinary inquiry, TCMPB cancelled his registration and ordered payment of inquiry costs.

b) Case 2: A registered TCMP allowed a ME to display a copy of his TCM practising certificate in its premises, thereby enabling it to disguise itself as a legitimate TCM clinic. By lending his credentials in this manner, he abetted the carrying on of an unlicensed ME. He was convicted of two counts of the offence and sentenced by the State Courts to pay a fine of $1,000.

   Following his conviction and upon conclusion of TCMPB's disciplinary inquiry, TCMPB suspended his registration for three years, issued a censure, and ordered payment of inquiry costs.

11. There are further cases currently under inquiry. The outcomes of these cases will be published on the TCMPB website upon conclusion.

12. TCMPB will continue to take firm disciplinary action against registered TCMPs who breach the ME Act or who bring disrepute to the profession. Registered TCMPs who facilitate vice activities will also face serious disciplinary consequences.

Upcoming Changes to the ME Regulatory Framework

13. The Police have announced that the following changes will take effect in the second half of 2026[2]:

- New Category 3 ME Licence for open-concept MEs. Open-concept establishments will no longer be exempt and must obtain a Category 3 ME licence.

[2] https://www.police.gov.sg/Media-Hub/News/2026/04/20260421_singapore_police_force_tightens_massage_establishment_regulatory_regime

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- All applicants for Category 3 ME licences will be subject to "fit and proper" requirements and tighter licensing criteria.
- All massage establishments must display at their shopfronts an SPF-issued poster with the licence number and a URL for public reporting of breaches.
- MEs will no longer be required to seek approval on their staff uniform design but must adhere to Police-issued uniform standards.

Implications for Co-located Operations

14. With this change, registered TCMPs operating in co-located settings should take note of the following:

- Co-located MEs operating with both the open-concept and registered TCMP exemptions must obtain a Category 3 ME licence for any massage services provided by non-TCMPs.
- Any business offering massage by non-TCMPs must apply for an ME licence, even if other services are provided by a registered TCMP.

Conclusion

15. MOH and TCMPB urge all registered TCMPs to uphold the highest professional standards and ensure that their clinics operate within the law. The integrity of the TCM profession depends on each practitioner doing their part.

16. Please disseminate this information to all relevant personnel in your TCM clinic, including the business operators.

17. Please take note that any premises where massage services are administered, including TCM clinics, are subject to compliance checks by SPF under the ME Act.

18. Should you have any queries regarding this circular, please contact TCMPB at pcps@spb.gov.sg or send your query to SPF by filling out the form at https://www.go.gov.sg/spf-prd.

ADJ PROF (DR) RAYMOND CHUA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH
HEALTH REGULATION GROUP
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
for DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH

PROF LIM SHIH HUI
REGISTRAR
TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS BOARD

SAC JARROD PEREIRA
DIRECTOR, POLICE REGULATORY DEPARTMENT
SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE

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