

Secretary for Health praises DH's new dedicated Digital Herbarium for Chinese Medicines website (with photos)

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, today (March 26) attended the launch ceremony of the Department of Health's new dedicated website Digital Herbarium for Chinese Medicines (DHCM) (www.cmherbarium.gov.hk), and praised the website for providing comprehensive, accessible and accurate Chinese medicines information to members of the public, as well as the Chinese medicine and related sectors. It also laid an important milestone for the innovative application of Chinese medicine data and resources by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government.

The DHCM is established by the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute (GCMTI) of the DH through digitalisation of Chinese medicines specimens into a digital collection. High-resolution pictures and related data of 220 commonly used Chinese materia medica (CMM) and their source plants are currently included at the DHCM. It is the first online herbarium of its kind that provides comprehensive information on Chinese medicines, and also the first in the world using photogrammetry to produce three dimensional (3D) images on traceable CMM specimens.

The launching ceremony was held at the Hong Kong Science Park today. Addressing the launching ceremony, Professor Lo said, "The HKSAR Government has been sparing no effort in promoting the comprehensive and high-quality development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address that the platform of the GCMTI would be leveraged for accelerating the promotion of Chinese medicine informatisation and digitalisation to facilitate the sharing of information, through establishing a digitalised Chinese medicines information platform for Chinese medicine identification and educational purposes.

"With the establishment of the world-class DHCM, it marks the HKSAR Government's important step forward in promoting the innovative application of Chinese medicine data and resources, and also the preservation and innovation of Chinese medicine developments. It is also part of the HKSAR Government's efforts to dovetail with the country's Construction Plan for the Chinese Medicine Highlands in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (2020-2025) for creating a 'highland of innovation' and 'highland of internationalisation', as well as to tie in with the implementation of the Development Plan for the Informatisation of Traditional Chinese Medicine during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period."

Speaking at the ceremony, the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam, said, "The DHCM serves as a comprehensive platform on Chinese medicines testing,

research, education, and cultural promotion, bringing further convenience and value for the related sectors. By making good use of digitalisation, network and information innovation, not only the inheritance and innovation of Chinese medicine could be enhanced, but the high-quality development of Chinese medicine could also be fostered."

Users of the DHCM may use the name of CMM or plants, their medicinal uses, collection locations, or medicinal parts as keywords to search for information of the Chinese medicines. The uses, precautions on proper use, and storage information of each CMM are provided. The scientific information such as chemical information, microscopic slides, DNA sequences and 3D images are also provided for some CMM.

Furthermore, virtual reality (VR) technology is also used in the DHCM to provide a virtual tour to the Chinese Medicines Herbarium of the GCMTI for users. They will be able to view the precious CMM specimens donated by the National Medical Products Administration through the National Institutes for Food and Drug Control.

After officiating at the launching ceremony Professor Lo, accompanied Dr Lam, visited the GCMTI managed by the DH, which is located in Hong Kong Science Park. He learned about the latest progress of the GCMTI's work on Chinese medicines testing methods and standards setting, and also exchanged views with laboratory staff on their work.

Professor Lo stressed, "The missions of the GCMTI are to develop a set of internationally recognised reference standards for Chinese medicines and related products by employing state-of-the-art technology and through scientific research, and to help empower the industry through transfer of technology to strengthen quality control of products, with a view to establishing the brand image of Hong Kong in Chinese medicines and developing Hong Kong into an international hub for scientific research on Chinese medicines testing and quality control."



