



## Commentary

### A new official national regulations for complementary medicine practices in Saudi Arabia



keywords: Cupping therapy; Acupuncture; chiropractic; national regulation; Saudi Arabia.

Complementary medicine or alternative medicine is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as various healthcare practices that are not part of either conventional modern medicine or traditional cultural practices. These terms are used also instead of traditional medicine in some countries.<sup>1</sup> National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) in Saudi Arabia is part of Ministry of Health and was established by the Council of Ministers (Resolution 367-9-11-2009).<sup>2</sup> NCCAM acts as the national reference for all complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practices in Saudi Arabia. The roles of NCCAM include: regulating practices, licensing practitioners and clinics, supervising, enhancing public awareness, conducting research and surveys, training, and documenting complementary and traditional medicine.<sup>2,3</sup>

A new regulation, titled *The NCCAM regulation – second edition*, was issued from the Ministry of Health to set new rules to regulate CAM practices in 2019 and published in Um Al-Qura, the official national newspaper, on December 20, 2019.<sup>4</sup> In this new official regulation, new rules were approved to regulate CAM practices in Saudi Arabia. According to the new regulation and In addition to CAM practices that are currently licensed in Saudi Arabia such as acupuncture, cupping therapy, naturopathy, osteopathy, and chiropractic, the NCCAM has the authority to add, cancel, or suspend any CAM practices according to a set of standards of CAM practices developed by NCCAM.

Furthermore, it is prohibited to practice any type of complementary and alternative medicine without obtaining a license from the NCCAM through professional classification and registration in accordance to the professional classification and registration manual of CAM practitioners, and passing the required exams and evaluation.

Licensed practitioners should follow the ethical guide of healthcare professions. Practitioners must get a certain number of continuous professional development hours as stated in the Professional Classification and Registration Guide.

There are also new rules for licensing institutions. Institutions should have a license from NCCAM before offering any services related to CAM. All health and technical requirements related to the institution building must be fulfilled and followed in accordance with the law of private health institutions and its executive regulations.

The new official regulations have other sections for institutions responsibilities, which include having an electronic

medical recording system, and penalties for practitioners and institutions.

The new regulations go into effect immediately after release. For institutions that provide any of the CAM practices and services, there are 6 months to register and get the necessary license from NCCAM.

Issuing these national official regulation for CAM practices is a part of the continuous efforts of NCCAM to ensure the safety of CAM practices in Saudi Arabia. This national official regulation sets an example of the minimum standards and requirements which are needed to regulate CAM practices especially in Middle East countries.

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#### Conflict of interest

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#### Ethical statement



Not applicable.

#### Data availability

Not applicable.

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