



Acupuncture & Chinese
Herbal Medicine

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I am writing in response to your request for comments regarding Ephedra use. The vast majority of studies assessing Ephedra and ephedrine health risks involve cases when these have been used to aid weight loss and to enhance athletic performance. In Chinese medicine Ma Huang (Ephedra) is not used as an aid to weight loss or to increase energy levels, it is used by trained professionals for conditions such as colds, cough, wheezing and congestion. Trained professionals dispense Ma Huang in certain conditions when appropriate, within properly balanced herbal combinations, in small dosage and for a limited period of time. Ma Huang is a valuable herb in the Chinese Materia Medica and plays an essential part in the first systematic Chinese herbal text, written around 200 A.D.. The improper uses of Ma Huang are well documented in the Chinese Medicine literature including Dan Benski's *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica* that trained professional's practitioners of acupuncture and Oriental Medicine study.

The National Institute of Health and the World Health Organization have cited Oriental Medicine, which includes Chinese herbals as an effective means of healthcare. More recently, in 02/11/03, the NY Suffolk County passed a bill banning ephedra. However this bill exempts Ma Huang when used by qualified professionals, practitioners of acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. In this way trained professionals can take care of their patients and the public can have access to a safe and legitimate form of herbal medicine.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Brien

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"When your heart is pure, the needle will be guided by your spirit"

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