

Appendix

Case – Television Programme “Mother Knows Best, Doctor Knows The Facts” (醫咗阿媽都唔知) broadcast on 9 March 2026 from 9:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on the TVB Plus Channel of Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB)¹

10 complaints were received about the captioned programme, concerning some of the health recommendations made by the guest speaker of the programme, including that (a) vegetables and fibre were not necessary for the survival, growth or health of humans; and (b) treating constipation by increasing fluid intake was effective only for patients who were severely dehydrated. The complainants considered these recommendations inaccurate, misleading and contrary to public health guidelines issued by the World Health Organization and the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health (DH).

The Communications Authority (CA)’s Findings

In line with the established procedures, the CA considered the complaint case and the representations of TVB in detail. The CA took into account the relevant aspects of the case, including the following –

Details of the Case

- (a) at the beginning of the programme, the host introduced the programme as a health information programme which aimed to

¹ Television Broadcasts Limited has changed its name to TVB Limited since 24 July 2026.

address common misconceptions by providing lesser-known facts;

- (b) the two hosts then discussed with the guest speaker, a registered medical practitioner (the “Doctor”), on subjects relating to intake of dietary fibre and constipation. Specifically, the host began by asking whether insufficient vegetable intake would cause constipation. In response, the Doctor explained what constipation was (i.e. “便秘就應該係話你好難排啲大便出嚟...即係話我哋個腸裏邊有好多唔能夠溶解嘅纖維，就塞實咗”), and explained in detail why eating vegetables could not relieve constipation that already existed. He then asserted conclusively, without providing elaboration or scientific evidence, that the minimum human requirement for fibre was zero; that humans did not need to eat any vegetables; and that humans could maintain long-term health solely on a meat-based diet without dietary fibre (“人類對纖維嘅最低要求係零...唔係話食菜有害，但係就我哋係唔需要食蔬菜...如果我明白到人係肉食性動物嘅意思，即係話可以長期只可以食肉淨食肉，而長期長期可以健康咁生活...我哋人類係可以長期唔需要膳食纖維都可以係好健康，咁樣生存係長期永遠都可以”). The programme ended with a disclaimer that the programme contained personal views which did not represent the stance of the broadcaster;
- (c) TVB submitted that the relevant provision required only “reasonable efforts” to ensure accuracy, and that it had made reasonable efforts by featuring the Doctor, a registered medical practitioner, to discuss constipation from his own professional

perspective. The Doctor provided medical references and supporting material for his opinion, which were not presented in the programme as the official or public health guidelines. The supporting material showed that the Doctor's comments had a credible medical basis, and the comments did not disparage any public health authority or advise viewers to ignore medical advice applicable to their own health conditions; and

- (d) regarding the accuracy of the health recommendations made by the Doctor in the programme, the CA consulted DH which pointed out that in the absence of elaboration on the relevant context and supporting scientific evidences, some of the Doctor's health recommendations appeared incomplete, deviating from DH's general health advice on dietary fibre and fluid intake and had potentially caused confusion among viewers who were general members of the public.

Relevant Provision in the Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standards (TV Programme Code)

- (a) paragraph 2 of Chapter 9 – The licensees shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the factual contents of, among others, programmes dealing with medical and health issues are accurate. (Referred as the “accuracy requirement” below)

The CA's Considerations

The CA, having regard to the relevant facts of the case including the

representations of TVB, considered that –

- (a) the programme clearly positioned itself as clarifying misconceptions and presenting true facts related to health. Hence it was a programme dealing with medical and health issues, and its factual account should be subject to the accuracy requirement;
- (b) the Doctor advised viewers that humans could maintain lifelong wellness without any dietary fibre. Both DH and the CA noted from TVB's submission that such advice was based on the Doctor's research paper on the carnivorous diet of the Pleistocene Hominin (i.e. our hunter-gatherer ancestors living more than 10 000 years ago) and Arctic populations who likely had a distinct genetic build-up, and did not necessarily apply to modern humans. Yet, the programme, programme hosts and the Doctor did not mention the above basis of the Doctor's advice, which was essential to keep the public informed of their relevant context and applicability;
- (c) the Doctor's conclusive advice, without mention of the research or the basis, might have misled viewers into believing that eating vegetables would cause constipation;
- (d) as the programme was positioned clearly as a health information programme clarifying common myths and the Doctor being a registered medical professional, his health recommendations, presented as concluding remarks without substantiation of the target population and the specific context of his research basis, could be mistaken as applicable to the general public;

- (e) while appreciating that neither TVB nor its programme hosts had the medical expertise, the CA considered that the hosts had not made reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy of the facts presented, for instance the hosts could have at least asked whether the Doctor's medical recommendations applied to all or only individuals with specific circumstances and health conditions. Also, the hosts did not remind the audience to consider their individual health conditions or consult their doctors, while such clarifications were commonly found in other health information programmes;
- (f) without the above information and clarifications, the Doctor's health recommendations that human's lifelong wellness did not need any fibre appeared incomplete;
- (g) the disclaimer at the end of the programme could not discharge the licensee from the responsibility to meet the accuracy requirement; and
- (h) any conclusive recommendations such as those made by the Doctor in the programme deviating from common public understanding and/or DH's and WHO's general health guidelines should be duly explained to serve public interest. The impact of such health recommendations on the general public should not be underestimated.

Decision

In view of the above, the CA considered that the complaints were

substantiated. Taking into account the possibly inaccurate and misleading information presented in the programme which was of significant public interest and could bring potential impact on public health, the CA decided that TVB should be **strongly advised** to observe the relevant requirements of the TV Programme Code closely.

Follow Up Action

The CA has reminded TVB to ensure its programmes comply with the applicable accuracy requirement under the TV Programme Code, and to address the incomplete, possibly inaccurate and misleading information presented in the relevant episode of the programme.