

Chinese Medicine Practitioner interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Chinese Medicine Practitioner roles typically explore your clinical reasoning, patient communication and ability to work in private practice. Employers want to know you can assess patients safely, prescribe herbs responsibly and manage a clinic day efficiently.

- **Clinical reasoning and assessment:** Questions that ask you to walk through a patient case, explain your diagnostic process or justify a treatment choice.
- **Treatment and prescription:** Questions about acupuncture techniques, herbal formulas, moxibustion, cupping and how you tailor treatments.
- **Patient communication and education:** Questions about explaining treatment, managing nervous patients and providing diet and lifestyle advice.
- **Practice management and tools:** Questions about clinical records, appointment software, billing and how you organise your day.
- **Safety and professional standards:** Questions about registration, CPD, scope of practice, referrals and managing adverse events.

Usually a one-on-one interview with the clinic owner or senior practitioner, sometimes followed by a practical assessment or a trial shift. You may be asked to walk through a case study, demonstrate your assessment approach or discuss how you handle difficult patient situations. Expect questions about your registration, CPD and how you keep records.

1. Walk me through how you assess a new patient presenting with chronic lower back pain.

Why they ask

This tests your clinical reasoning and systematic assessment, which is central to safe and effective practice.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: start with history, then pulse and tongue diagnosis, then differential diagnosis, then treatment plan and review.

Example answer

"First I take a full history, including the onset, location and nature of the pain, plus any aggravating or relieving factors. I also ask about sleep, stress, diet and previous treatments. Then I conduct a pulse and tongue assessment to understand their constitution. I check for red flags that would require referral, such as sudden severe pain or neurological symptoms. Once I have a clear picture, I explain my findings and propose a treatment plan, which might include acupuncture, moxibustion and herbal medicine. I also discuss lifestyle changes and set a review after a few sessions."

2. Tell me about a time you had to adjust a treatment plan because a patient was not responding as expected.

Why they ask

This looks at your adaptability, clinical judgement and ability to reflect on outcomes.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"I had a patient with insomnia who had been receiving acupuncture for several weeks. They reported only mild improvement. I reviewed their pulse and tongue again and realised their pattern had changed. I adjusted the point selection and added a herbal formula for their constitutional type. I also checked whether they were taking any new medications. Over the next few sessions, their sleep improved and they were able to reduce their reliance on sleep aids."

3. A patient asks whether they can take Chinese herbs alongside their prescribed blood pressure medication. How do you respond?

Why they ask

This assesses your understanding of herb drug interactions, scope of practice and when to refer.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: acknowledge the question, explain the need for caution, check interactions, consult with their GP or pharmacist, and document.

Example answer

"I would thank them for asking, because it is an important safety issue. I would explain that some herbs can interact with blood pressure medication, so I cannot give a simple yes or no without checking. I would ask for the exact medication and dose, then consult a reliable interaction database or a pharmacist. If there is any doubt, I would advise them to speak with their GP before starting herbs. I would document the discussion and only proceed if it is safe and within my scope."

4. How do you explain acupuncture to a patient who is nervous about needles?

Why they ask

This tests empathy, patient education and consent.

How to structure your answer

Empathy and explanation: validate concerns, explain the procedure, offer alternatives, get consent.

Example answer

"I start by acknowledging their fear and letting them know it is common. I explain that acupuncture needles are very fine, much thinner than a blood test needle, and that most people feel only a mild sensation. I show them the needle and describe what they might feel. I offer to start with just one or two points and let them stop at any time. I also mention alternatives like acupressure or moxibustion if they prefer. Only when they feel comfortable do I proceed, and I check in throughout."

5. What systems do you use to keep clinical records and manage appointments?

Why they ask

This checks your practice management skills and familiarity with common tools.

How to structure your answer

Direct description: name the tools, explain your process, mention privacy and follow up.

Example answer

"I use Cliniko for clinical records and appointment scheduling. I write notes immediately after each session, including assessment findings, treatment given and any advice provided. I use Power Diary for reminders and HotDoc for online bookings. I also use Xero for invoicing and basic bookkeeping. I make sure all records are kept confidential and comply with privacy requirements. At the end of each day, I review notes and follow up on any referrals."

6. Describe a time you referred a patient to another health professional. What was the outcome?

Why they ask

This looks at collaborative care, professional boundaries and patient advocacy.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"I had a patient with chronic headaches who mentioned new visual disturbances. I recognised this as a red flag and referred them to their GP the same day. I wrote a brief letter summarising my findings and sent it with the patient's consent. The GP arranged further tests and the patient was diagnosed with a condition that needed medical management. I continued to support them with acupuncture for symptom relief alongside their medical treatment. The outcome was coordinated care and no delay in their diagnosis."