

Through a Century: Traditional Chinese Medicine Since 1912

Jianping Zhu

Medical History Research Room, China Institute for History of Medicine and Medical Literature, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, Beijing 100005, China



Abstract

Since 1912, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) went through the stages of the struggle, foundation, and growth. The all-round developing TCM is academically progressing and promoted worldwide. Characteristics of the centennial development of TCM have cultural relevance, policy pertinency, mutual supplement between Chinese and western medicine and TCM is treatment directed by pattern diagnosis. Researches show that the historical inevitable development of TCM will benefit the people for generations to come when taken as a national strategy.

Keywords: A century of traditional Chinese medicine, characteristic, enlightenment, history of traditional Chinese medicine

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1911 revolution, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) underwent extraordinary wax and wane and witnessed a magnificent upsurge. Researches show that the historical inevitable development of TCM will benefit the people for generations to come when taken as a national strategy.

THE DEVELOPMENT THREAD OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Since 1912, TCM went through the stages of the struggle, foundation, and growth. The all-round developing TCM is academically progressing and promoted all over the world.

1912–1949, TCM struggled for survival and self-development. The 1911 Revolution declared that the 2000 years long feudal monarchy came to an end, and China stepped into a new era. In the late qing dynasty, to eliminate poverty and enrich our country, China was forced to open the gateway of the country, and then took the initiative to introduce western sciences (including western medicine) and democracy. Our society was transformed from the ancient form into a modern one, and integrated into the world. Almost every field of the society, including political system, thought, culture, economy, science, technology, etc., accepted the baptism of the western civilization and promoted social progress.

The corrupt, backward, feudal political system was overthrown. At the same time, the excellent traditional Chinese culture including TCM suffered from the unprecedented impact as well. The Northern Warlord government education authorities excluded TCM from the national education system deliberately. Then, the Health Committee of Nanjing central government passed the proposal for abolishing TCM. In the meantime, some celebrities and political leaders also held critical and negative attitudes to TCM, which created a very bad impression. For a moment, TCM suffered a great calamity. With support from the public, people in the TCM industry united to advocate TCM using the arguments of the Chinese culture, academics, economics, and people's livelihood, etc., and they succeeded [Figure 1]. Thereafter, the central Hospital of TCM was established, scientization of TCM was promoted, *Regulations on TCM* and *Interim Enumeration Of Educational Subjects For TCM Institute* were issued, and the examination system for TCM doctors was implemented [Figure 2]. During the period of the Republic of China, the majority of our old disciplines were replaced or dismembered in the process of the transformation of the knowledge system.

Address for correspondence: Prof. Jianping Zhu, China Institute for History of Medicine and Medical Literature, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, Beijing 100005, China. E-mail: zhujp1958@163.com

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Figure 1: The petition group to Nanjing against the national Government's proposal for abolishing traditional Chinese medicine in 1929

Only TCM retained its own traditional academic system, which benefited from the backing of all walks of life and the vigorous protection of 'Huangdi Neijing' basic TCM theory system from Yun Tiejiao, [Figure 3] Yang Zemin and other famous TCM practitioners. Due to the turbulent situation and other reasons, the proposal for abolishing TCM was shelved. However, with domestic problems, foreign invasion, pandemic diseases, and Chinese culture confronting collision and blend, TCM practitioners, who paid great attention to academic inheritance and innovation, soaked up new facts from western medicine, explored the confluence of Chinese and western medicine, proactively gave strong impetus to development of TCM, especially that in rural areas which had always been the backbone of our society for preventing and curing diseases during the period of the Republic of China.

1949–1977, TCM was founded and developed along the winding road. At the beginning of new China, the Public Health Administrative Department which discriminated against TCM implemented the scientization of TCM and requested the practitioners of TCM to learn western medicine at school [Figure 4]. In the aftermath, TCM was westernized and marginalized. Comrade Mao Zedong and the Party's Central Committee discovered and rectified the mistake in time. A series of policies had been put forward to support and cultivate TCM, and the TCM Section of the Ministry of Health was upgraded to TCM Department. Since 1955, the academy and institutes of TCM were set up. Summarizing the experience of prestigious Chinese physicians, encouraging the master-disciple education, collating and publishing ancient works and compiling college textbooks systematized the theory of TCM. TCM treatment based on syndrome differentiation had developed its own characteristics and successfully treated epidemic encephalitis B. Mao Zedong made a comment that "TCM was a great treasure-house which should be explored and improved carefully". He also pointed out that "the knowledge of TCM and western medicine should be blended into a new medicine in China." He proposed solidarity between the western medicine doctors and TCM

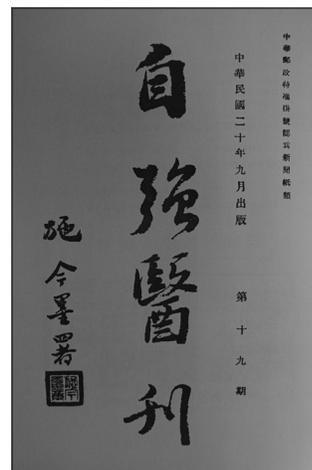


Figure 2: Cover of Ziqiang Medical Journal 1931.No19

practitioners, and that the western medicine doctors learned from TCM. The treatment with a combination of TCM and western medicine for acute abdomen syndromes, fractures and burns were carried out; the yin and yang syndromes, syndrome of blood stasis, and activating blood circulation to dissipate blood stasis were researched and differentiation of symptoms and diseases were combined. The principles of acupuncture anesthesia were elucidated, and artemisinin was invented. Chinese materia medica was recorded in *Chinese Pharmacopoeia*. TCM medicines, which were convenient, efficacious and inexpensive, played an active role. Acupuncture and medicinal herbs were widely used in the rural cooperative medical care and went abroad with the international exchanges and cooperation. During the 10 years of turmoil, the TCM institutes and organizations were revoked, professionals were sent to the countryside, the Chinese herbs and medicines were vulgarized, formalized, and politicized. During this period, the foundation for the TCM development was laid though there were twists and turns [Figure 5].

1978–2011, TCM was of all-round development, and went global. In 1978, No. 56 document of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was put forward to solve the problem of a lack of qualified technical personnel and academic heritage. In 1982, the Hengyang Conference emphasized the characteristics of TCM. *The Constitution* stipulated the development of both modern medicine and TCM. The health department established the policy of attaching equal importance to TCM and western medicine. In 1986, the State Administration of TCM of the P. R. C was established. Hospitals of Chinese medicine were established in each county, and the rural development of TCM was restored. Inheritance is the foundation, innovation is the driving force for TCM. Importance was attached to summarizing the experience of famous veteran doctors, and master-apprentice education was strengthened. The Chinese government had increased investment in scientific research since the 1990s. The introduction of modern scientific methods and advanced concepts promoted the process of exploiting

scientific modernization for TCM. Research on the syndrome of blood stasis and activating blood circulation to dissipate blood stasis, and the secondary development of Chinese patent medicine, etc., won the first prize of the National Scientific and Technological Progress Award. Tu Youyou was awarded the Lasker Award for Clinical Medical Research and the Nobel prize in physiology or medicine for inventing artemisinin. In 2003, *Chinese Materia medica Standards* was promulgated. National standardization strategy was implemented. The China Council issued *Several Viewpoints On Supporting And Promoting The Development Of TCM* in the new healthcare reform. TCM treatment, healthcare, scientific research, education, industry, and culture were comprehensively developed and coordinated in the “six in one mode.” TCM revealed its characteristics in the treatment of common diseases, frequently occurring diseases, the public health emergency and prevention and control for serious epidemics. Hospital-centered TCM service systems covering the entire country were basically established. It broadened the range of services continually, providing 14% medical service for the country with 6% workforce and institutions, and played the irreplaceable role of TCM in increasing health care reform. The TCM education system of multi-level, multi-form, and multi-way, and the scientific research pattern of multi-subject and multi-level were formed. Standardization and normalization of TCM boosted its modernization and internationalization. Along with rising economic and strategic position, the modernized TCM medicines industry has become an emerging industry. The TCM culture was carried forward, and people were provided with more convenience by TCM. Minority and folk medicines were further developed. TCM has spread to more than 180 countries and regions in the world. The export volume of TCM medicines is increasing. Several countries legislated for TCM and Chinese medicines. With the increasing national power, “reinforcing the combination of TCM and Western medicine” and “accelerating overseas development of TCM and Chinese medicine” promoted by Xi Jinping were implemented. Greater international cooperative efforts were made with the World Health Organization, and TCM has quickened its step into the world [Figure 6].

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CENTENNIAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Cultural relevance – Centennial development of TCM and its cultural matrix share a common fate. Cultural diversity was the foundation for the coexistence of TCM and western medicine. In the first half of the 20th century, TCM and Chinese traditional culture were denigrated. Moreover in New China, with the Chinese Cultural Renaissance, TCM was subsequently revitalized.

Policy pertinency –Centennial rise and fall of TCM were closely related to policies and regulations. During the period of the Republic of China, the Ministry of Education prevented TCM from admittance to the educational system. The Central

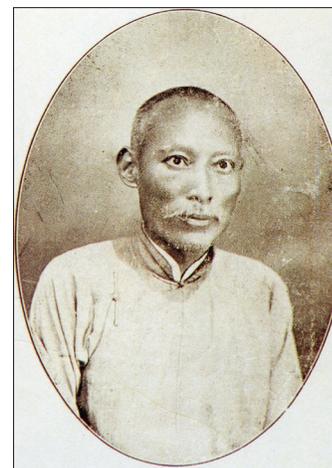


Figure 3: Yun Tiejiao



Figure 4: Setting up Ceremony of Academy of TCM of PRC's Health department in 1955

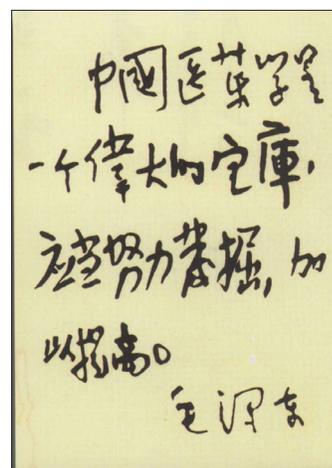


Figure 5: Chairman Mao's comment on traditional Chinese medicine in 1958

Committee of Health passed the proposal to abolish TCM which was facing a crisis of survival. In the early days of New China, the health authorities discriminated against TCM. It was in deep trouble again. After 1954, the CPC

Central Committee approved the status of TCM. From the “cooperation between Chinese and western medicine,” to “promoting the development of modern medicine and TCM” in *The Constitution*, from “attaching equal importance to Chinese and Western medicine,” to forming supportive policy for TCM into *Regulations on TCM*, TCM is progressing in industry and academic developments as the representative and example for traditional medicines in the world.

Mutual supplement between Chinese and western medicine. The centennial development of TCM shaped the pattern of mutual growth and supplement with western medicine. They have their own advantages and disadvantages, although there are controversies and competition. Cooperation and complement of them have become a tendency. Human health requires the complementary advantages from two or more kinds of medicines.

TCM is treatment directed by pattern diagnosis. Treatment based on pattern diagnosis embodies concentrated reflections of dynamic balance based on holism of yin and yang, compound medicines, individualized therapy, individual treatment and other core concepts. Although existing since ancient times, TCM was advanced and reinforced as a feature different from western medicine after the introduction of western medicine.

Retaining the characteristics of TCM development contributes to insisting on the guiding principle of integrative development of Chinese and western medicine, following the growth law of TCM consciously, giving further play to the superiority from TCM characteristics, and thus propels faster and better evolvement.

HISTORICAL ENLIGHTENMENT FROM THE CENTENNIAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

The historical enlightenment from the centennial development of TCM is that politics, technology, and other external factors have discernible effects on the evolvement of TCM. The industrial and academic progresses made by TCM are closely

related to the destiny of Chinese culture and policies from the authorities. The foreign cultures are referential but should only be drawn on according to our own specific conditions. Western science has its limitations and stages, and it cannot be equated with the ultimate truth. TCM is a great treasure house, which is an important force in protecting people’s health. Chinese and western medicines established their own systems with respective advantages. We should adhere to mutual learning, benefiting and developing in them. There are unique theory, method and development laws for TCM, which cannot be judged by the criterion of western medicine. Establishing TCM policies, applying modern medicine and other scientific and technological means, and setting up modern Chinese education should follow the objective law of its evolvement. Moreover, we will succeed in developing TCM through innovation based on inheritance, returning to the origin, and bringing into full play its advantages. Along with the prosperity of our country, TCM should enhance its own value, seek for international consensus, respect different laws, and then be competitive in the world [Figure 7].

We have had achievements in TCM development and attracted worldwide attention. Developing TCM, which is of important practical value and far-reaching strategic significance for the Chinese medicine industry and even social economic development, is a historic choice.

DEVELOPING TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE IS THE HISTORICAL OPTION

With the eastward spread of western culture, science, considered as the truth, marched into China. Traditional disciplines were replaced or integrated gradually, except the completely retained TCM. The introduction of western medicine turned into flourishing development rapidly due to the social transformation. However, TCM was queried as unscientific repeatedly, and even a few public figures found it difficult to step out of the limitations from history. Yet TCM was striving and strengthened by adversity, and acquired the



Figure 6: Pu Fuzhou was in consultation of Pecking Union Medical College Hospital (front right)



Figure 7: Regulation of PRC's traditional Chinese medicine

public support and national attention. TCM passed through the stages of decline, developing side by side with western medicine, integrated development, prevailing to the west, and spread over the world. With many twists and turns, centennial development of TCM experienced the period of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China and began to prosper. The history of the past 100 years shows that the development of TCM is the historical option.

Due to its reliable effects and complete theory system, TCM was a historical selection. Characteristics and advantages should be fully optimized in the new period such as the correspondence between human body and natural environment, holism, system theory, people-orientation, three categories of etiological factors system, treatment based on pattern diagnosis, overall regulation, preventive treatment of disease, sustainable ecological medical model, and natural, green, safe, effective, convenient and inexpensive suitable technology and methods etc.

History chose TCM for not only the irreplaceable academic value and technical value, but also for original thinking, the economic value from the whole industrial chain including herbal planting, production, circulation, medical treatment, rehabilitation, health-keeping tourism, cultural value from its humanistic philosophy connotation, environmental protection, sustainable ecological value from TCM theory of correspondence between human body and natural environment, and universal value from respect of life residing in TCM.

CONDUCTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AS A NATIONAL STRATEGY

TCM is necessary for disease prevention and treatment, human reproduction, and prosperity of our nation. Although it is ancient, the core concepts and controlling and preventing methods of it are not out of date. At present, the characteristics of TCM gain more and more domestic and international acceptance [Figure 8].

Firstly, TCM is crucial component of our medical and health undertakings. According to the data from the National Bureau of Statistics of 2013, TCM provided nationwide medical service for 15.4% outpatient patients and 11.9% of patients with 4.5% of medical institutions, 7.5% registered physicians and 6.36% medical expenses. TCM conducted an extremely important and irreplaceable role for the people's health.

The modern medical model and purpose are undergoing a profound transformation from the bio-medicine to BMS (biological, mental, and social) medicine, from treating diseases to maintaining health. Correspondence between the human body and natural environment, holism of body and spirit, preventive treatment of disease, theory, and method of health maintenance of TCM comply with the concepts and directions of medical development. Modern medicine encountering difficulties and challenges will find inspiration from the TCM.

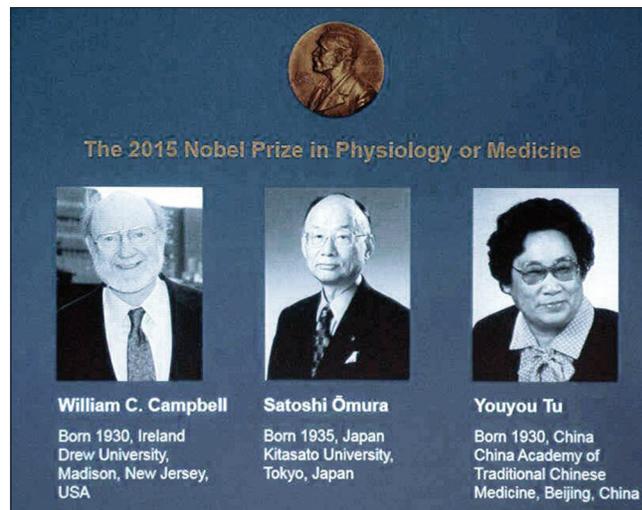


Figure 8: Youyou Tu has research on Artemisinin was rewarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 2015

Second, TCM is indispensable for increasing healthcare reform, maintenance of health and benefiting the people. Serving the people wholeheartedly and protecting the health of all are the starting points and goals of all our work. China is a developing country with a high proportion of the aged. By the end of 2013, there were over 0.2 billion people older than or aged 60, accounting for 14.9% of the total population. China is an agricultural country since ancient times. The rural population still accounts for 50.32%, around 0.7 billion presently. TCM was produced by an agricultural culture. The thoughts of advocating nature, complying with nature, harmonious accommodation and sustainable development have an intrinsic affinity with agriculture, rural areas, and peasants and enjoy great popularity among the people. In the agricultural modernization and urbanization era, the advantages of TCM still exist. The fundamental realities of aging before wealthy and the sluggish development of agriculture determine that TCM should participate in achieving the goal of civil Medicare. Furthermore, it will make a greater contribution in developing efficacious and inexpensive medicines to solve the worldwide problem in medical reforms with a Chinese solution.

Third, throughout the industry chain, TCM and Chinese medicines are crucial components of our Nation's health industry. From the TCM agriculture of planting and taming, the industry of Chinese medicine processing and equipment manufacturer, from the circulation of TCM products, business, to service industry, the field of TCM service extends from treatment to prevention and rehabilitation, including health maintenance, preventive treatment of disease, rehabilitation, health management, and expands into scientific research, education, health tourism, intermediary services and the culture industry. They are new social economic growth points to promote employment and encourage domestic demand for public entrepreneurship and innovation. In the social and economic development, they will be of inestimable strategic significance.

Fourth, TCM is the original subject of vitality, which has been passed down from the ancestors. Along with the expansion of the variation of the human disease spectrum, new epidemics, and multiple psychosomatic diseases, chronic diseases become mainstream. In this regard, TCM has much to offer. The effective treatment of SARS: discovery of artemisinin awarded by the Nobel prize for relieving millions of patients suffering from malaria: Arsenic TCM medicine for the treatment of leukemia: treatment of cardio-cerebral vascular disease by promoting blood circulation and removing blood stasis, and the contribution to keep the health of astronauts, are all innovations based on inheritance, and of typical significance for our implementation of innovation-driven development strategy. In the background of global integration and accession to the WTO, the original TCM owns the indisputable independent intellectual property rights, which is of important and far-reaching significance of promoting transformation from generics to innovative drugs and their export.

Fifth, TCM has a profound cultural advantage in humanities connotation. Medical ethics passed down from the ancestors are helpful in building the harmonious doctor-patient interpersonal communication ecosystem, promoting the masses' cultural quality, inheriting the excellent "gene" of Chinese culture, and enhancing the cohesion and solidarity of the Chinese nation. At present, Chinese culture is prevailing in western countries. TCM, which is not only of important medical value and economic value but also the significant carrier for spreading Chinese culture and demonstrating of our soft power, is heading for the world. Spread by this carrier, the universal human values including respect for life, maintenance for health and benefiting human beings, are more palatable to the world [Figure 9].

Nowadays, the development of TCM confronts the challenges and opportunities. The TCM industry has huge developing space. However, the characteristics and advantages of TCM have not been fully exploited. The policy system and mechanism complying with its characteristics and requirements of development are rudimentary. Therefore, under the guideline of building medical and health undertakings with Chinese characteristics, we must enlist the development of TCM as a national strategy, do its top-level design and comprehensive plan well, coordinate the relations between TCM and western medicine, TCM inheritance and innovation, prevention and



Figure 9: Acupuncture of traditional Chinese medicine was included in the Masterpieces of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2010 (Provide by Yingying Wang)

treatment, career and scholarly pursuits, government and market, herbs and food etc., are the contribution from TCM to the health industry and the "China dream" realization.

China dream is an embodiment of the great rejuvenation of our nation, and a personification of turning China into a strong, prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious socialist country. As the Chinese Nation's outstanding cultural treasure, we must recognize the strategic importance of TCM for promoting public health causes and realizing China dream in the economy, science, technology, culture, ecology civilization, etc. People's health is the foundation of all things. Survival and health are the foundation of China dream. Dream and pursuit are based on nation-wide health. TCM and Chinese medicines are the health security of all the people, and the China dream is achievable.

Jianping Zhu, a professor and research fellow at the China Institute for History of Medicine and Medical Literature, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, Beijing, China, specializing in the history of TCM and terminology of TCM. E-mail: zhujp1958@163.com.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.