

REVIEW

Traditional Chinese Medicine: The Effect on the Human Therapy

Mohamad EL Dhaybi^{1,2*} 

¹ Little Prince High School-Saint Joseph Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey

² Medicine Faculty, University of Limoges, Limoges, France

* Corresponding Author: Dr. Mohamad EL Dhaybi, [e-mail: mohamad.dhaybi@g.kp.k12.tr](mailto:mohamad.dhaybi@g.kp.k12.tr)

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Abstract

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is an ancient system of health that has been used in China for thousands of years. TCM has played an essential role in treating disease and enhancing human health. This Traditional Medicine used 2500 years ago is based on some ancestral concepts and many medical approaches. This review aimed firstly to show you an overview about the history of Chinese medicine. In the second part, it will be focused to present a few pillars which influence human therapy and are still used in clinical today to treat modern diseases.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese Medicine, Human Therapy, Chinese Herbal Medicine, Acupuncture

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is an old health and wellness system that has been used in China for thousands of years. TCM is based on balance, harmony, and energy. There are two central ideas behind TCM:

a) Qi: Also called energy or vital force. According to Chinese Medicine, Qi circulates throughout the body and is constantly changing. Treatments for TCM often focus on ways to maintain the flow of qi⁽¹⁾.

b) Yin and Yang: These are opposites that describe the qualities of Qi. Yin is associated with the cold, the night, the feminine and the negative. Yang is associated with daylight, warmth, positivity, and masculinity.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, when you balance the yin and yang of Qi, you feel good and healthy. So when they are out of control, you feel sick. Chinese medicine focus to create a healthy flow of qi.

In this review, the essential principles and concepts used in this medicine will be clarified by presenting an overview on the history of TCM. In the second part, a few pillars and strategies used in this medicine as a human therapy to treat some dangerous diseases will be explained⁽²⁾.

History of traditional chinese medicine:

TCM is largely used in the Sinosphere^{(3) (4) (5)}, and has evolved a long history since the first traces of practice dates to 1000 BCE (Before the common Era). Since then, it has continued to develop and evolved by a successive dynasty in China.

Traces of therapeutic approaches in China dates from the **Shang dynasty** (1850- 1122 BCE) and **Zhou** (1121-771 BCE). According to these dynasties, Epigraphic data investigated the existence of primitive Chinese medicine related to natural and spiritual concepts. Because of furious desires expressed by ancestors, Therapy then consisted of satisfying them by giving earthly gifts such as clothing, food, tea, and other offerings⁽⁶⁾.

Before the 19th century, to design all forms of medicine in China, the term Yi was generally used (醫) which means “medicine”, and the variant is the character (醫). When compared these two ideograms, we notice that the lower part of “Yi” (醫) turns into (巫) which means the “magic”. This allows us to suggest that, during antiquity in China, Medicine and Magic were related disciplines for treating disease⁽⁷⁾. The artifacts that better represent the history of the Shang Dynasty are oracle bones.

In the oracle inscriptions bone, it was found some characters refer to diseases that affected the Shang royal family such as: “nose illness, head illness, eye illness”, etc. This proves that Shang people had a concept of illness and on the specificity and localization of illness⁽⁸⁾.

Han Dynasty (206 BCE- 220 CE) is the first dynasty of unified China. Developed TCM continued and evolved. During this period, three books were written that still considered today as fundamental classics:

a) Shén Nóng Běn Cǎo Jīng (神农本草经) : It is composed of 365 medical substances (including 252

vegetables, 67 animals, 46 minerals) that are classified into three major groups according to their utility and toxicity level.

b) **Shāng Hán Zá Bīng Lùn** 伤寒杂病论 which constitutes an essential role, both clinical pathology and Chinese pharmacology.

c) “**Nan Jing**” which clarifies knowledge about pulse diagnosis and acupuncture. The Nan Jing was the first Chinese work in which the medicine was no longer associated with magic and demonism⁽⁷⁾.

During the period of **Sui** (590-617) and **Tang** (618-907) dynasties, Chinese civilization lives in political stability that promotes cultural and economic development. The main figure of this period is Sūn Sī Miao who wrote books on acupuncture and national pharmacopoeia^{(8) (9)}.

In another part, around 900-1000 AD (Anno Domini), the first precursor to a modern vaccination occurred in China. The Chinese were the first to explore and develop a primitive form of a vaccine around the 10th century. Known as inoculation or variolation, this method was developed to prevent smallpox- a dangerous disease that frequently plagued Asia and Europe in the Middle Ages⁽¹⁰⁾.

The followed dynasties **Song and Yuan** (960-1368) were marked by a huge exploration in the field of chemistry, mainly that of distillation on aromatherapy and phytotherapy. From 1368 to 1643, the **Ming dynasty** came. This period was considered as a boom in acupuncture. Yáng Jì Zhōu displayed a synthesis of all knowledge concerning acupuncture and presented mainly around 670 acupuncture points⁽¹¹⁾.

During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), new TCM works appeared, but under the influence of western ideologies, this ancestral and traditional medicine was more and more criticized⁽¹²⁾. Then came the Cultural revolution (1966-1978). During this period, the Chinese government performed large investments in traditional medicine and tried to develop public health facilities and inexpensive medical care. This movement started to define a new and modern China⁽¹³⁾. In the 19th century, Western doctors began to practice acupuncture. It was the diplomats who played an efficient role to import this discipline⁽¹⁴⁾.

Today in China, TCM and Western medicine are associated and go hand in hand. Although there are hospitals dedicated to Chinese medicine and others to Western medicine, all Chinese medicine doctors are entitled to prescribe western medicines⁽¹⁵⁾.

Tcm : Effect on the human therapy

While in the West, medicine seeks to cure diseases, in China, TCM focuses on caring for a human

health. In this part, an essential pillar that can be developed to bring TCM more interesting will be discussed and how TCM can promote healthy people and the planet will be displayed. The essential therapeutic means used in traditional Chinese medicine for restoring and maintaining the harmony of the body in its environment are:

- Chinese Herbal Medicine
- Acupuncture

1) Chinese herbal medicine (CHM)

CHM is part of a vast healing system called Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which also includes massage therapy, acupuncture, and exercise. The main principles of TCM differ from traditional Western notions about illness, the workings of the body and health⁽¹⁶⁾. Chinese herbs are prescribed to stabilize imbalanced energy that runs through invisible meridians in our bodies. The TCM concepts suggests that everything including body organs - is formed of the five elements: earth, fire, metal, water, and wood. The herbs are also classified into the five tastes - salty, sweet, bitter, sour, and pungent - which correspond to these five elements, for example (the skin is a metal element organ, it could be treated with a pungent herb)^{(16) (17)}.

Normally, CHM is mainly plant - based, but some preparations contain animal products or minerals. They can be packaged as pastes, powder, tablets, or lotions, depending on the herb and its previewed use. In this traditional Chinese medicine, herbs are used simply, somewhat in the manner of Western herbal medicine. Herbs most used include **Schisandra, lyceum, licorice, astragalus and astragalus** (Figure 1). Besides herbs, some substances considered as supplements are utilized in CHM such as glandular extracts, human placenta, and a variety of minerals^{(18) (19)}.



Figure 1. Examples of Herbal Chinese Medicine (<https://acupuncturenutrition.com/therapies/chinese-herbal-medicine/>)

For today, CHM can be used to treat any virtual condition including liver disease (cirrhosis and hepatitis), colds and flus, menstrual pain, menopause, and cancer treatment support^{(19) (20)}.

2) Acupuncture:

a) Principles of acupuncture therapy:

The term acupuncture comes from the Latin *acus*, which means "needle" and *pungere*, which means "to prick". Today, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is used in more than 78 countries around the world. Traditional acupuncture is a therapeutic practice that involves stimulating specific points on the body called acupuncture points to relieve, prevent or cure a disease⁽²¹⁾. These points are mainly found at the level of the nerve endings: feet, hands, head, ears... The needles then promote nervous stimulation which will make it possible to restore the good circulation of vital energies in the body. Acupuncture uses the meridian system where energy flows. The needles are planted on some of the 361 acupuncture points, and act on the energy present in this point and which reflects the energy circulating in the meridian and the viscera that it serves **Hata! Başvuru kaynağı bulunamadı.**

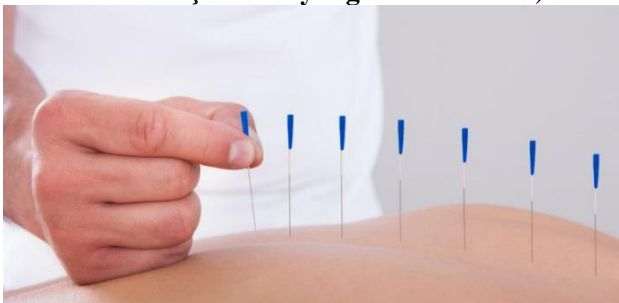


Figure 2. Principle of Acupuncture
(<https://www.sante-sur-le-net.com/acupuncture-place-urgences/>)

The points to be stimulated are defined by the therapist, after a complete examination of the person based on the taking the pulse in different parts of the body thus making it possible to assess the circulation of energy in the body⁽²²⁾. Two old techniques derived from acupuncture are also to be mentioned: acupressure and moxibustion. Stimulation of the acupuncture points is then done

by the pressure of fingers in acupressure or by a heat source in moxibustion⁽²³⁾ (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Principle of Moxibustion

(<https://www.britannica.com/science/moxa-treatment>)

Today, Electro-Acupuncture also shows a development. It is an acupuncture technique in which small electrical impulses are applied to fine needles inserted at specific points⁽²⁴⁾.

CONCLUSION

The history of Chinese Medicine is constantly evolving. The "tradition invented" by Mao seems to be more than a transformation, a mutation of Chinese medicine into an "integrative" Chinese medicine as has been achieved already over the centuries. Chinese acupuncturists have always been careful not to reject previous concepts and have preferred to integrate them into the initial corpus. In China, even if acupuncture has been gradually rejected in favor of Western medicine, many different models persist where Western acupuncture and traditional acupuncture based on the great Classics coexist to unify and modernize the practice, which the West has called Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), but which for the Chinese is simply Chinese Medicine. The advantages of Chinese Medicine are numerous: Besides its preventive aspect, TCM benefits from a long history and continuous evolution. Therefore, it accumulates a knowledge which allows it a very wide field of application. Today, the main inconvenience of TCM is that it is often compared and opposed to conventional Western medicine. In fact, these are mostly two visions and systems that can be mutually beneficial⁶.

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