

Preface to Series

Does Traditional Chinese Medicine Work?

History should be acknowledged and respected. Despite this, the historical value of Chinese medicine in China and some parts of Asia should not be used as the only important evidence of efficacy.

While clinical science has followed closely the principles of deductive research in science and developed its methodology of wide acceptance, there is a natural demand from both users and service providers that the same methodology be applied to the traditional art of healing. There should be only one scale for the measurement of efficacy. Thus, evidence-based medicine, which apparently is the only acceptable form of treatment, would also claim its sovereignty in Chinese medicine.

In spite of influential proponents and diligent practitioners, efforts relating to the application of evidence-based medicine methodology to Chinese medicine research have been slow and unimpressive. This should not come as a surprise. Evidence-based medicine requires the knowledge of the exact chemistry of the drug used, the exact physical or chemical activities involved and above all, the biological responses in the recipient. All these are not known. Working back from the black box of old historical records of efficacy requires huge resources and time, if at all possible. Insistence on this approach would result in either unending frustrations or utter desperation.

Parallel with the modern attempts, respectable Chinese medicine practitioners have unendingly and relentlessly cried out their objection to the evidence-based approach. They insisted that all the evidences were already there from the Classical Records. Forcing the classical applications through a rigid modern framework of scrutiny is artificially coating Chinese medicine with a scientific clothing that does not fit.

Thus, the modern proponents are facing an impasse when they rely totally on modern scientific concepts. The traditional converts are persisting to push their pilgrims of defense. Where do we stand so as to achieve the best results of harmonisation?

There must be a compromise somewhere. Classic evidences can be transformed into a universal language to be fairly evaluated and to be decided whether suitable for further research, using the deductive methodology or an innovative one after intelligent modifications.

There is a need for a platform on which a direction can be developed in the attempt to modernise the traditional art and science of healing, while remaining free and objective to utilise the decaying wisdom without prejudice.

With the growing demand for complementary/alternative medicine from the global public and a parallel interest from the service providers, there is an urgent need for the provision of valuable information in this area.

The Annals of Chinese Medicine is a timely serial publication responding to this need. It will be providing authoritative and current information about Chinese medicine in the areas of clinical trials, biological activities of herbs, education, research and quality control requirements. Contributors are invited to send in their reports and reviews to ensure quality and value. Clinicians and scientists who are willing to submit their valuable observations, resulting from their painstaking researches are welcome to send in their manuscripts. *The Annals of Chinese Medicine* has the objective of providing a lasting platform for all who concentrate their efforts on the modernization of Chinese medicine.

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Preface to Volume 3

The third volume of the *Annals of Traditional Chinese Medicine* carries the theme of Cancer Treatment. Since the commencement of this book series, the Editorial Board has emphasized its main objective, that is to help modernize Chinese medicine, thus providing a convenient platform for all scientists, including those who belong to the traditional camp as well as members of the modern scientific community who insist on strict deductive approaches.

Cancer is obviously one of the most common areas where demand for alternative treatment is overwhelming. A significant portion of the American and European populations regularly consumes health supplements to either prevent cancer or as adjuvant therapy during cancer treatment. Health surveys conducted in Hong Kong (a city of predominantly Chinese people) have shown that over 90% of cancer patients consume products of Chinese medicine, either prescribed by Chinese medicine practitioners or purchased over-the-counter. Choosing Cancer as the theme of our third volume is therefore appropriate. There is no intention of guiding the reader on the choice of therapy, nor is there any suggestion of preferences of the available options of treatment (although a few solid examples are given). Instead we want to introduce the justification and logic of using Chinese medicine as an adjunct, discuss about the basic principles and the options that are available, expose the regional and cultural varieties, and some problems related to their use, describe some natural products of particular interests and lastly, give examples of specific cancers being treated with herbal therapy.

Using modern scientific concepts to understand and explain traditional or alternative medicine is logical and unavoidable. Indeed, the *Annals* has already adopted this principle. Nevertheless, we welcome distinguished

scholars of the very traditional stream to explain their views, particularly at this time, in the popular field of cancer.

Professor Dai-Han Zhou is a learned scholar in Chinese medicine who has written extensively on the principles and practice of Chinese medicine for cancer patients. Readers will find his articles quite out-of-the-norm as he stresses on holistic care and the importance of individualized therapy. On the other hand, Prof. Zhou tries to equate herbalists' observations as evidence-based medicine, and assumes that some herbs work via specific channels resembling those being targeted by new therapies like Iressa, Tarceva and Avastin. Professor Zhou quoted one clinical trial using a proprietor herbal medicine. In that situation, he accepts generalization and ignores individualization. The article is really interesting because it exposes the complexity of thoughts of the modern day Chinese medicine expert. While the discrepancies observed may be controversial, Prof. Zhou's strong criticisms against over-treatment in modern medicine and his call for higher rates of survival among cancer patients should be established as good advice for all.

Professor Zhou's orthodox account is well balanced with Professor Stephen Sagar's Western medicine perspectives on the scientific basis of cancer care in Chinese medicine.

This volume attempts to give very rich accounts of the varieties of cancer treatment available, as well as the cultural differences in China, Hong Kong, Japan, India, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. There are altogether seven chapters sharing this load.

Since herbal medicine can be the main basis for the maintenance of survival in spite of the persistence of cancer or cancer metastases, natural products and phytochemistry that contribute toward survival via various channels should be explored. This volume provides a number of high quality articles (by authors from Canada, India and the US) on the subject. Lastly, there are some real examples of integrated treatment for specific cancers that will be of interest to readers. Two good examples from China are chosen.

With the growing demand for complementary and alternative medicine from the global public and a parallel interest from the service providers, we believe that this volume will provide valuable information in the area of cancer for all.