

# Available Approaches to Combining Traditional and Modern Medicine in China

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**Abstract:** The search for the best possible form of interaction between modern and traditional medicine in China is quite a controversial issue. It is established that there is a number of social and philosophical viewpoints concerning the problem of integration of modern and traditional medicine, including the following: their integration is impossible; Chinese and modern medicine can be combined in terms of mutual complementation in treatment practice; the integration is quite likely. The author proves that an important prerequisite for the solution to this problem is understanding of the role of the worldview factor and traditions of the Chinese population. The search for the ways to integrate traditional and modern medicine is possible only provided that there is necessary political support from the state.

**Keywords:** Traditions of the population, medicines, integration, Chinese medicine, political system, culture, globalization.

## INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of people's life is directly related to improving the quality of their health care. The effectiveness of medical service can have many components; in particular, it can have a national component. We are talking about the means and methods of treatment of a person that is accumulated in the historical memory of people. Hence, the attention of health care institutions to the positive experience of treatment gained by different nations of the world is natural. The experience of culturally developed peoples is of particular interest. Treatment processes of these peoples reach such a high level of theoretical understanding and systematization that in this case, one should speak about such a phenomenon as folk medicine, that is, about specific activity in the field of health care which combines science and practice. There are few phenomena of folk medicine in the world, and one of them is traditional Chinese medicine.

The positive experience of Chinese medicine - acupuncture, cauterization, cupping glasses, herbal treatment, etc. - is confirmed by extensive clinical practice. This resulted in the growth of pragmatic interest, including outside of China. There are indicative statistics below. According to the M. Xiaowei data, are about 55,000 (54,243) health care facilities of traditional Chinese medicine of various types, including

4,566 hospitals (compared with the previous year, the growth of hospitals is 8%) [1]. The total number of medical workers (doctors, nurses and other categories) is about 667 thousand [1]. According to J. Zeixian, the number of higher educational institutions and specialized schools of Chinese medicine has reached 42, including 25 universities and institutes of Chinese medicine [2]. Chinese medicine departments were established in 238 universities [2]. There are 46 Master's Dissertation Boards and 17 Post-Graduate Course's Dissertation Boards. The total number of students studying Chinese medicine exceeded 752 thousand people [2]. There are 996 scientific journals on Chinese medicine on the most voluminous website of scientific papers of China (China National Knowledge Infrastructure).

Pharmaceutical industry takes a special place. Now there are about 60 thousand registration numbers of Chinese drugs. The gross industrial output of these traditional pharmaceutical industries reached 786.6 billion (about 28% of the total gross production of the medical and pharmaceuticals industries) [3].

The following statistics reveal the active use of traditional Chinese medicine beyond the borders of China. The area of traditional Chinese medicine covers 183 countries [4]. According to WHO's statistics, currently, 29 of its Member States have permitted the use of acupuncture. 18 Member States included acupuncture in the health insurance system. In more than 30 countries and regions, hundreds of Chinese medicine educational institutions have been

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established to train local professionals. China has signed agreements on cooperation in the field of Chinese medicine with 86 countries and regions. In the USA, Russia, Austria, France, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Spain and other 17 states, international centres or demonstration bases of Chinese medicine were established. In Germany, there is one polyclinic of Chinese medicine (or acupuncture) for every 15 thousand people. In the United States, there are about 8,000 acupuncture outpatient clinics, in the Netherlands - 1,600 Chinese medicine outpatient clinics, in France - 2,800 acupuncture outpatient clinics, in Australia - more than 3,000 Chinese medicine outpatient clinics and nearly 3,000 acupuncture clinics. In recent years, 3 Chinese medicine hospitals have been established in France and Germany, which were recognized by the European Union [4]. It should be noted that WHO adopted the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Classification of Diseases 2019 (ICD) [5], which for the first time includes information on traditional medicine drugs.

As for the traditional pharmaceutical industry, in 2017, the volume of its export reached about \$3.6 billion [6]. Chinese medicine drugs are patented in Russia, Cuba, Vietnam, Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

These statistics, of course, show that attention to traditional Chinese medicine is not random. Chinese medicine acts as a successful addition to modern medical practices, and in some cases, even as their effective alternative.

### **Problem**

In this connection, an important problem of the theoretical substantiation of the optimal form of interaction between modern and traditional medicine in the PRC arises.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Modern medicine penetrated China in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (during the reign of the Qin dynasty) in the process of familiarization of this Asian civilization with the European culture. High performance of a new type of medicine objectively led to a decline in the popularity of traditional medicine, despite its undoubted achievements. The latter lost its scientific status and gradually, as the European influence spread in Chinese society, was displaced to the periphery of the health care system.

However, as already noted, the effectiveness of traditional Chinese medicine did not allow it to become a thing of the past. Both in imperial China and, later, in the PRC, questions were raised continuously about one or another kind of integration of European medicine in its national origins (but then of the global and modern nature) and traditional medicine. The purpose of this kind of integration was to improve the quality of treatment of the Chinese population.

As for modern Chinese scientists, the medical, scientific community currently has several points of view on the problem of the integration of modern and traditional medicine in the PRC.

Among them, the following are worth noting:

- 1) *The integration of Chinese and modern medicine is impossible.* It has neither topical significance nor specific content for research. The so-called combination of Chinese and modern medicine is only a political slogan [7], medical utopia [8].
- 2) *Chinese and modern medicine can be combined, in the sense of mutual complementing, in medical practice (combination in a broad sense).* Proponents of this point of view believe that one needs to look for answers to most of the issues that are not solved by modern medicine in the field of Chinese medicine [9-12]. In 2016, Head of the Chinese medicine study group on Chinese medicine, Chen Jiguang, on behalf of the group members (Zhang Xiaomin, Zhang Nan, Xing Tiandong, Ge Liang), proposed deleting the phrase "integration of Chinese and modern medicine" from the "Law on Chinese Medicine and Chinese Drugs", and encourage their combination in a broad sense [13].
- 3) *The integration of Chinese and modern medicine is possible.* Within this view, the integration of Chinese and modern medicine based on three points of view were considered:
  - 3.1. Approval of the full possibility of integration from a professional point of view [14, 15].
  - 3.2. Approval of specific forms and methods of integration [16-21].
  - 3.3. Possibility of integration, starting from the philosophical sphere, development of an ontology of language of medicine, search for the basis for commensurability of theories [22-24].

## DISCUSSION

The diversity and, in some cases, conflict, of the points of view of the scientific community on the problem of the theoretical interaction of modern and traditional medicine in China, indicates the complexity of this problem. At the same time, in the course of the ongoing discussions, promising ways of solving it are outlined. The proposal to take into account the role of a worldview, within which one or another type of medicine appears, has a deep meaning. Indeed, medicine, like any other specific science, comes from a particular scientific picture of the world. The latter becomes apparent in a broad ideological context.

Without a doubt, the types of medicine under consideration are developing in the framework of different worldviews. Modern medicine is developing in the framework of the worldview of the Early Modern Age, which especially clearly showed its essence by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is materialistic and atheistic in the sense that the next world (the world of spirits, gods, etc.) is not the subject of science here. This worldview is expressed by Marxism, positivism, and other modern philosophies. As for traditional medicine, it develops within the framework of the ancient worldview. This is a pantheistic worldview, according to which the next world has many connections with our world; the elements of nature here are deified. Such a worldview is described by religious and natural-philosophical doctrines, and the latter has more naive idealism than materialism. This pantheistic worldview is characteristic not only of China [25]. Developed ancient cultures, including European ones, have similar views of the world. Of course, this also influences the understanding of treatment. In the practical works on the medicine of Hippocrates, Galen and other doctors of ancient Greece and Rome, one can find both natural philosophy and natural magic. It is no accident that Hippocrates noted that “doctors, like philosophers, respect gods” [26].

The reason for this similarity of views in different ancient cultures lies in their common origin from the archaic myth, which humanizes the world, endows the phenomena of nature with human qualities.

Going of Western science in general, and Western medicine in particular, beyond the ancient worldview, has become a unique historical event. It is customary to seek the cause of this going beyond with the spread of Christianity. Classical works on the history of science, (T. Kuhn. The structure of scientific

revolutions; P. P. Gaydenko. The Concept of Science, and others), show how Christian monotheism opposed traditional beliefs; breaking man's magical ties. The first victim of monotheism at the beginning of the European Middle Ages was natural magic, which united a person with the next world bodily. At the end of the Middle Ages, rational magic, which combined these worlds intellectually, was prohibited. A marker of this prohibition was the dispute of the scholastics of the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries “on the status of concepts” and the victory in this dispute of the position of nominalists that is absolutely new for European religious thought. The nominalists proved that if God is a person, the uniqueness of this person excludes the possibility of his rational cognition. The prohibition on cognizing God was religious in nature, but at that time, religion influenced everything, including science. As a result of this prohibition, the next world ceased to be the subject of European science. The refusal of such knowledge led to the fact that the next-world (i.e., supposedly genuine) essence of natural phenomena turned out to be fundamentally uncognizable for a scientist. In this case, only sensual data of natural phenomena and their interpretation in his theory remained accessible to the scientist.

These views were finally established in Europe at the beginning of the Early Modern Age. They contributed to the development of empirical, experimental science. Its characteristic features are the break with religion, the struggle with authorities, reliance on the senses, the search for natural (and not next-world) fundamentals of natural phenomena, the establishment of strict causal relationships in nature, etc. This type of European science in general, and medicine as its part was called “modern”.

The interaction of traditional and modern medicine in Europe, which commenced at the beginning of the Early Modern Age, is a subject of separate research. However, no doubt that the history of this relationship is of great importance for understanding universal (common to all countries) and unique national features in the interaction of traditional and modern medicine in China. Under this circumstance, we outline the critical points in the history of European medicine.

The controversy of the new European medicine with the old natural-philosophy school manifested itself at the very beginning of the Early Modern Age (17<sup>th</sup> century). Attention was drawn to the need to search for not spiritual, but natural causes of diseases (F. Bacon), a mechanistic principle was formulated in medicine,

which gave a natural interpretation of the causes of physiological phenomena (R. Descartes) [27]. The development of this principle in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries made it dominant (see, for example, the analysis of the philosophy of medicine of this time in the work of M. Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*). The rich practical experience gained by traditional European medicine over the millennia of its existence was accepted, but it was interpreted as a part of a new scientific picture of the world. As for the natural philosophical, theoretical heritage, it was discredited as having no relation to real science. A major role in this discreditation was played not only by medical theorists, but also by government officials, government institutions, and subsequently - the government health care system of European countries. As a result, preserved traditional theoretical and practical treatment complexes (for example, homoeopathy, naturopathy, osteopathy and others) have been recognized as parascientific and concentrated in the private sector.

The difference in the history of medicine in Europe and China can be fixed as follows. In Europe, although the traditional and modern forms of medicine were based on different ideological platforms, the process of their change was natural, successive, including at the level of the base of practices. Often, new theories borrowed the old conceptual apparatus, but they filled it with new content corresponding to the scientific pictures of the world of the Early Modern Age. Displacement of traditional medicine was systemic in nature, supported by the state. In China, a new medicine was introduced from the outside, was a product of another culture; therefore, the worldview conflict of traditional and modern forms of medicine was complemented by civilizational conflict. Traditional medicine in China is closely connected with its rich culture; its medical vocabulary is integrated with the language of the Chinese people and continues to be naturally formed, enriching its content. Traditional medicine in China has had and has extensive support at the state level, which allows it to continue to develop effectively. These circumstances must be taken into account in a comparative analysis of the phenomena of the subject area.

## CONCLUSIONS

A review of the problem of theoretical substantiation of the optimal form of interaction between modern and traditional medicine in China shows its many-sided nature. Problem clusters are, among other things, the development of the conceptual apparatus and

methodology of the theory of medicine, ways of interpreting databases and successful practices. However, the study shows that an essential prerequisite for a common solution to this problem is an understanding of the role of the worldview factor. Especially given the fact that finding ways to integrate traditional and modern medicine has become an important political task in the People's Republic of China.

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