

Herbal Medical Center in South Boston

David L. Liu, MD, PhD
Director, Herbal Medical Center
242 Dorchester Street, South Boston, MA 02127, USA

During the past 25 years China has opened to industrialized countries and its successful economic reform has made vigorous economic growth, people in Western countries have understood this nation, its culture and traditional medicine better than ever.

China is one of ancient countries and Chinese ancestors had made four major contributions to the development of world civilization: (1) The gunpowder for rockets, (2) the compass for sea navigation, (3) the word-typing case system for editing and printing, and (4) paper-manufacture for publication and newspapers. As early as 3,000 years ago Chinese in written appeared. The earliest Chinese characters were carved on shells in the Shang Dynasty (1600-1100 BC).

Today, Chinese medicine has not been a fresh word to people in Western countries. Acupuncture therapy has been approved to treat diseases in the U.S.A. and around the world. Multiple herbal remedies have been allowed to be used in cardiovascular disorders, ischemic brain cases, immunodeficiency and others in this country. The combination therapy of herbal remedies, acupuncture and medical massage has been confirmed to be effective in the treatment of chronic diseases that cannot be cured or alleviated with Western medicine.

The Chinese word for "sickness" is Ji. It means a person lying in bed with injury from an arrow, a common condition in ancient wars. The earliest medical textbook in China is called Huang-Di-Nei-Jing written during the late Zhou Dynasty (1100-770 BC). In that time, there were four sorts of oriental medical workers: physicians for internal diseases, surgeons for trauma and infection, dietary workers for nutrition and veterinarians for domestic animals, particularly for military horses. In the "Forbidden City" in Beijing where was the place for Chinese emperors and their families, there were two senior and two adjunct physicians, four assistants and 20 apprentices for medical and drug affairs.

In the history of Chinese medicine, three most popular physicians had made the historic contributions to the Chinese traditional medicine. Bian Que (407-312 BC) was regarded as the inventor of acupuncture therapy. He also summarized the diagnostic procedure of a disease into the following four methods: inspection, auscultation-smelling, history taking and pulse examination. Bian Que's story has been cited many times by the textbook of surgery in the United States:

"One day two men, Lu and Chao, called on the surgeon Bian Que. He gave them a toxic drink and they were unconscious for three days. Bian Que operated and opened their stomachs and explored the hearts; after removing and interchanging their organs he gave a wonderful drug and the two men went home recovered" (Sabiston DC, Textbook of Surgery, 1991).

Hua Tuo (141-207 AD) was popularly regarded as the father of traditional surgery. He prepared an anesthetic powder with herbs, administered in wine to put patient to sleep for abdominal operations. This was the earliest documentation of general anesthesia in medical history.

Li Shi-Zhen (1518-1593 AD), a great pharmacologist, wrote a gigantic medical work "Ben-Cao-Gang-Mu (The Compendium of Medical Materials) published in 1590 AD. This work contained 52 volumes listing 1,892 medical substances, with detailed description of their appearance, properties, methods of collection, preparation and use of them, and providing more than 1,000 illustrations. There were also more than 10,000 prescriptions listed.

Today, herbal medicine and acupuncture therapy are widely used in China, Japan, Korea, Indian, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnams, United States, Australia, Germany and other countries. In China, approximately 60%± of municipal patients are treated with Western medicine and 40%± of them are treated using traditional Chinese medicines. However, approximately 60% of farmer patients are still treated with herbal medicine currently. It has been estimated that approximately 2.0 billion populations (30%± population from the around world) are relied upon their traditional medicine.

Chinese medicine is classified into 1) herbal medicine that includes traditional and modern herbal medicines. Traditional Chinese medicine is personalized herb-packaging that needs to be prepared by patients at their home. Modern herbal medicine represents hi-tech made concentrated herbal remedies. Modern herbal medicine is called the oriental medicine or alternative therapy in Western countries, Han-Fan medicine in Japan, refined Zhong Yao in China. 2) Acupuncture therapy. 3) Tui Na therapy (deep tissue massage). 4) Medical massage, i.e. the combination of deep tissue massage with surface use of herbal extracts.

I personally served 7 years for Beth Israel Hospital where my colleagues and I made hybrid tumor vaccines for breast cancer, sarcoma and melanoma, and cancer gene therapy for human colorectal carcinoma. I have also served 3 years for Boston University Medical Center in autoimmune diseases, including diabetes, scleroderma, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. During the period of my 30-year medical professionals I used to integrate Western medicine with alternative therapy because each of them has its advantages. Generally speaking, many acute diseases can be effectively treated with Western medicine, for example, trauma and injury, massive bleeding, heart attack and cardiovascular diseases, surgical and genetic disorders, early stage of tumors which can be radically removed by surgery, transplantation of organ and tissue and others. On the other hand, some chronic diseases can be efficiently treated by the combination of herbal remedy, medical massage and acupuncture, such as headache, migraine, dizzy, allergy, pain in muscle, elbow, neck, shoulder, low back and rheumatoid arthritis, depression, hearing loss, hypo-immunity, and rehabilitation of stroke and Alzheimer's disease. More importantly, herbal remedies are non-addictive, not drug-resistance and side-effect free if they are used in a right recipe.