

Looking at China: Cost-Effective Healthcare Relief in a Modern Society

The organization of TCM as it is implemented in China as well as China's export strategy for the coming five years.



In a brief communication with a Dutch branch organization of insurers, I asked if their organization would be interested in more and elaborate information on the health benefits of Chinese medical approaches such as herbal medicine as currently developed and researched in China. The response was, to say the least, surprising: "You should tell your colleagues in in China not to use endangered animals in their medicine." I explained that endangered species forbidden here are also forbidden in China and that I talked about herbal remedies, and that all medicine, Western or Chinese, come from plants. And, that I am not a Chinese person" The answer: "oh..."

As every now and again prejudices on TCM seem to pop-up out of nowhere, I think it would be good to list some background information. Many articles written on TCM and its development are still in Chinese and maybe because of this, as a result in the Netherlands people understand little about its modern development. I have seen many excellent research program examples of this in

Shanghai and have frequently been approached to accomplish cooperation between high-level universities from China, open to cooperation with Dutch scientific institutions. So here is an attempt to create some updated information.

On January 18, 2017, the Chinese president Xi Jinping explained during a visit to the World Health Organization China's vision on international cooperation in accomplishing the global health goals of the WHO. China focusses on cooperation in research and development in battling the health challenges of the 21st century.

Among the many possibilities in Chinese healthcare, its culture offers an approach in medical solutions known as Traditional Chinese Medicine. Simultaneous to the development of Chinese medicinal herbs, acupuncture now is a widely accepted method of healing. Already in November 2015, China aimed to intensify international cooperation in the development of Chinese medicine over the following 15 years. The Chinese central government and ministries promote these developments through transforming the modern (bio)medical model into an integrated and broader platform for Chinese medicine at home, as well as abroad.



This strategy is in line with the goals established in 2002 by the World Health Organization. WHO introduced a new concept simply referring to all indigenous health systems as Traditional Medicine, and in 2014 they published a report reappraising a WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023 acknowledging the progress in research which has been accomplished in TM all over the world. The central aim of this strategy is summarized as follow:

The *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023* will help health care leaders to develop solutions that contribute to a broader vision of improved health and patient autonomy. The strategy has two key goals: to support Member States in harnessing the potential contribution of T&CM to health, wellness, and people-centered health care and to promote the

safe and effective use of T&CM through the regulation of products, practices, and practitioners (WHO, 2014:9).

The strategy proposed by the WHO aims to create foremost affordable healthcare within various cultural contexts. Such an integrated model is already in effect in China. There are now more than 3700 National Hospital and more than 30.000 Chinese medicine clinics working with integrated models. At present 42 universities in China offer specialization in Chinese medicine with an average staff of 55 people. In total 580.000 students as well as practitioners attend studies.

In the field of research and development, there are already 16 Chinese clinical research bases organized through the Chinese Academy of Sciences in China, and these focus on major national scientific-technological projects and programs. In conclusion, Chinese Traditional Medicine (TCM) is growing into a fast modernized form of pharmaceutical cost effective production.

In the wake of these developments multilateral and bilateral cooperation has been established with more than 100 cooperation agreements with relevant international organizations and relevant countries have signed 83 special cooperation agreements.

China aims at a new cooperation model of foreign exchange, which is to establish a sound service system and trade policy, support of key institutions; to intensify its efforts to encourage and promote the multi-time, multi-channel, international cooperation in various fields and regulate both drug administration, patents, and intellectual property rights.



In a recent article Xu Jianguang, presidents of the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese wrote:

“Chinese medicine has spread to 183 countries and regions, China and foreign governments, regional and international organizations have signed 86 Chinese medicine cooperation agreement. Chinese medicine has been approved in Australia, Canada, Austria, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa in the form of national or local government legislation. China is promoting the construction of overseas Chinese medicine center, and vigorously promote the development of overseas Chinese medicine.”

From December 2017 the Chinese government’s aim is to create more overseas centers in Chinese medicine and extend international cooperation. Among other the first of these cooperation’s lists: in the with the US National Institutes of Health Institute of Cancer (in cooperation with the International Union of Traditional Chinese Medicine), in Europe; Paris, St. Petersburg, Kyrgyz, Hungary, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and in Luxembourg. In Africa; Malawi and in Australia in Melbourne. By the end of 2017, China hopes to have achieved 17 other joint projects, in, a.o. in Europe, in Switzerland, Spain, Montenegro, Scandinavia, Portugal.

Somehow in the Netherlands, there is a tendency not to take the possibilities of joint research and development serious enough and this is a pity as it would improve healthcare, patient autonomy, and cost effectiveness and with 2 million patients in the Netherlands aiming at alternative medicine, cooperation would benefit everybody. As herbal remedies have no side effects, they could offer solutions especially for patients with chronic illnesses. Recent research accomplished positive data for women’s menopause, diminishing the side effects of hormonal treatment. Heart medicines have also been developed. The personalized approach of herbal remedies insures that medication includes women in research of effectiveness. Chinese medicine always is personally adjusted and not just cover groups of men between 25 and 40 years old. They heal, but will never poison the soul as many anti-depressants do. Time to heal? Time to cooperate.

References:

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(source: <http://news.sina.com.cn>: 山东省人民政府关于贯彻落实国家中医药发展战略规划纲要(2016-2030年)的实施方案)

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