

ZHANG XICHUN (1860-1933)'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Zhai Hailong, M.D.¹, Cen Ruixiang^{2*}

¹Lecturer, Hubei Polytechnic University, School of Medicine, Huangshi, Hubei, China

²Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Huangshi Central Hospital,
Affiliated Hospital of Hubei Polytechnic University

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ABSTRACT

Zhang Xichun (1860-1933) was a distinguish doctor during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China and a leading proponent of the “school of converging and connecting Chinese and Western medicine (*hui tong xue pai* 匯術學派)”. Zhang insisted that traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine should link up and learn from each other, that traditional Chinese medicine should be foundation while Western medicine should be application, “Integrating traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine to form one.” but “theory of traditional Chinese medicine comprise that of western medicine.”. He invented a lot of effective new prescriptions combining Chinese herbs with western drugs and a lot of effective new Chinese medicine prescriptions. He was one of the earliest Chinese medicine educators in China and founded Correspondence School of Chinese Medicine.

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INTRODUCTION



Figure 1 Zhang Xichun (1860-1933)

Zhang Xichun (Figure 1), also called Zhang Shoufu (1860-1933), was a distinguish doctor during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China and was called “the leader figure in medicine throughout the nation” at that time. He studied ancient Chinese medical books and advocated the combination of traditional Chinese and Western medicine.

*Corresponding author: Cen Ruixiang

Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Huangshi Central Hospital,
Affiliated Hospital of Hubei Polytechnic University

He was a leading proponent of the “school of converging and connecting” Chinese and Western medicine (*hui tong xue pai* 匯術學派)^[1] and was the author of *Essays on Medicine Esteeming the Chinese and Respecting the Western* (*yixue zhongzhong canxi lu*), which was widely read.

Zhang Xichun's contributions

Influences on medicine in China of the early 20th century
In the early 1920s, he was famous as one of "the four medical masters" together with Lu Jinsheng and Yang Ruhou of Jiangsu, and Liu Yuchu of Guangdong ". He, together with Zhang Shengfu from Cixi, Zhejiang, Zhang Shanlei from Jiading, Shanghai, was also called "three famous doctors surnamed Zhang "^[1].

Academic contribution to traditional Chinese medicine and the integrated traditional Chinese and Western medicine
Esteeming Chinese medicine and respecting western medicine
Zhang insisted that traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine should link up and learn from each other, that traditional Chinese medicine should be foundation while Western medicine should be application. “Learn but not be stuck to ancient theory of traditional Chinese medicine, refer to western medicine but not betray Chinese medicine.”, “Integrating traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine to form one.” but “theory of traditional Chinese medicine comprise that of western medicine.”^[2].

On physiology, Zhang integrated "heart controlling mental activities" in the theories of Chinese medicine and “the

functions of brains are mind, consciousness and thinking” in western medicine and argued “Human’s of mental activities lie in brains and hearts.” “The substance of mental activities lies in brains while the functions of mental activities lie in hearts.”^[3]

On pathology, “therapy for brain anemia” showed his above ideas. He pointed out that “brain anemia, in opposite to brain hyperemia, is blood deficiency in brain. Patients with brain anemia feel heavy head, dizziness, Westerners think that brain anemia is ischemic in brain, so brain can’t be nourished and can’t take charge of sense and movement. However, if only hematinic is used to treatment brain anemia, it can’t be cured. *Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine* claimed ‘Qi deficient in the upper, empty in brain.’ ...therapy for brain anemia should be nourishing brain with blood, promote blood to go upward. ...blood-supplement decoction with large-dose astragalus mongholicus to supplement Qi and small-dose angelica sinensis to nourish blood should be used to treat brain anemia.”^[2]

He interpreted “The diseases of Stomach Meridian originate from Heart Meridian and Spleen Meridian.”, a sentence in *Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine*, with the theories of nervous regulation and gastric acid secretion. He thought food digestion in stomachs depended on acidic juice in stomachs. When one was hungry, acidic juice was spontaneously secreted in his stomach. If one was in excessive melancholy and consideration, acidic juice would be less or even not be secreted in his stomach, then food in his stomach wouldn’t be digested. When prescription was made up, atractylodes macrocephala was used to promote spleen Yang, yam was used to nourish stomach Yin. So gastric juice was sufficient and food intake certainly appeared^[4].

On jaundice, he interpreted it with western medicine. He said “Westerners said bile could permeate small intestine and digest food. If bile is too little, stool will be white and food won’t be digested. If too much, green and bitter saliva will be vomited. If bile spill into blood, jaundice will occur.”^[5]

Zhang analyzed pathology of stroke by connected stroke in Chinese medicine with brain hyperemia in western medicine. On brain hyperemia, *Theory of Regulating Meridian, Plain Questions, Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine* said “if blood and Qi ran together on the top (head), then falling into a severe coma occurs. The coma may lead to sudden death. If vital Qi returns, live. Otherwise, die.” Zhang analyzed, “Westerners only talked about hyperemia, But *Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine* said ‘blood and Qi ran together on the top (head).’ Since blood rises with Qi, what *Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine* said is definitely right. Westerners studies diseases according to pathoanatomy. They just saw congestion in brains but didn’t explore the pathogeny by thinking and reasoning. So they just named the disease brain hyperemia.” “If Qi rises upmost then goes down, following Qi, the congested blood in brain goes down, then live. Otherwise, if Qi rises upmost and continues upward, following Qi, the congested blood in brain congests and congests, vessels in brain will rupture, then die”^[6,7].

He thought that western drugs were good in treating symptoms while Chinese herbs excelled at curing causes. Combining Chinese herbs with western drugs could treat both symptoms and causes together. He would like to take use of the advantages of western drugs to make up the weaknesses of

Chinese herbs. A well-known example was that he invented gypsum-aspirin decoction to treat combination of exogenous wind-cold but interior heat. He said “Giving its nature, gypsum is quite suitable to combine with western medicine aspirin. The heat-clearing capacity of gypsum is large, but its capacity of relieving exterior symptom is little. Aspirin, with acidic taste and cold nature, is good in reaching exterior, i.e. make the stagnated interior heat disperse through the exterior, Aspirin, with the synergism of gypsum, shines more brilliantly in the gypsum’s company.” He also said “The effect is wonderful for aspirin combined with gypsum to treat swelling and pain of joints.” Another example was that he once had levigated secale coruntum and lactose mixed with Gucong Decoction he formulated, then the mixed decoction was drunk to treat menorrhagia. He used yam, cogongrass rhizome decoction combing aspirin to treat gout. He used *Os draconis preparata* and concha ostrear, dogwood fruit and potassium bromide to treat nocturnal emission. He used decoction combing aspirin to treat tuberculosis. In addition, he used yam porridge combing pepsin to treat indigestion. He used honey combing magnesium sulfate to treat yangming sthenic symptom (constipation). He used lithium bromide, bromine water and ammonium bromatum combing lead-sulfur cinnabar pill to treat epileptic seizure^[8].

His another academic achievement is that he invented a lot of effective new Chinese medicine prescriptions, based on his long practice. 189 Chinese medicine prescriptions were recorded in *Essays on Medicine Esteeming the Chinese and Respecting the Western*. 166 of them, which were drawn up by himself and were used to treat the diseases of internal medicine, surgery and gynaecology and obstetrics, were characterized by few traditional Chinese medicine ingredients, targeted, easy to be applied. 90% these prescriptions were made up of less than 8 traditional Chinese medicine ingredients, most 5-6 traditional Chinese medicine ingredients, some even 1-2 traditional Chinese medicine ingredients. But a main traditional Chinese medicine ingredient in a prescription was often used in large-dose. For instance, 30g rheum officinale furunculosis were used for furunculosis, 60g for mania. Many of his prescriptions are effective and nowadays still be widely used in China, such as Zhenganxifeng Decoction, Shengxian decoction, Gucong Decoction, Jade Humor Decoction, *et al*^[9,10].

A foundation laid for modern Chinese medicine education Zhang Xichun was one of the earliest Chinese medicine educators in China. He founded Correspondence School of Chinese Medicine, took charge of teaching affairs himself, drew up course plan and compiled textbooks for the school himself and taught in the school himself.

The courses offered *prescription, lectures on pharmacy* (including 70 traditional Chinese herbs and 45 western drugs), *lectures on pathology, lectures on Treatise on Febrile Diseases. lectures on anatomy, et al*, more than 10 courses. *Prescription, lectures on pharmacy and lectures on Treatise on Febrile Diseases* were excerpted from his *Chinese at Heart But Western Where Appropriate: Essays Investigating An Integrated Form of Medicine* and *lectures on Treatise on Febrile Diseases* were written for the school by Zhang Xichun and was also included in his *Chinese at Heart But Western Where Appropriate: Essays Investigating An Integrated Form of Medicine* later. Until now, these courses were still the main course framework of the universities of traditional Chinese

medicine in current China. Teaching in the school stressed the importance of “Learn but not be stuck to ancient theory of traditional Chinese medicine.”, integration of Chinese medicine and western medicine, and medical practice. Especially he emphasized the importance of medical practice. Academy of Integration of Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine was where he practiced, where his school was located and where his students could conduct clinical practice. His *Chinese at Heart But Western Where Appropriate: Essays Investigating An Integrated Form of Medicine* had been used as a textbook of many Chinese medicine schools for many years^[11-12].

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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