

# PRELIMINARY INTRODUCTION TO TCM THEORY

中医学导论

英文版

Editor-in-chief Cao Hong-xin (曹洪欣)



科学出版社

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北 京

## 内 容 简 介

本书以百题问答的形式,深入浅出地介绍了中医基础理论、诊断、治疗、养生等方面的知识。内容涉及中医学的阴阳五行、脏腑经络、病因病机、诊法辨证、中药剂型、方剂配伍等中医基础、诊疗等方面理论以及针灸、按摩、拔罐、食疗等养生保健方法。内容丰富、通俗易懂、方便实用。

本书可作为国内外中医初学者的入门读物,也可供从事中医药宣传、普及及教育等人员参考。

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# Foreword

Chinese medicine originated and developed in China. It is a science focused on the study of human life, the maintenance of health, and the prevention of disease. It reflects both the brilliance and richness of the Chinese culture. It is a holistic system of medical knowledge that organically integrates humanities and life sciences. It is one of the greatest contributions of the Chinese to the health of the nation and all human beings.

In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in medicine bringing with it an increased attention to health care, especially in the prevention and treatment of diseases using Chinese medicine, both here and abroad. The humanistic ideas within the teachings of Chinese medicine show the excellence of Chinese culture. Though the practice of Chinese medicine is more widespread now, that some countries cover treatments under medical insurance, it is still very difficult for beginners to understand or master the essence of Chinese medicine due to its esoteric nature as well as its profound theories. It is an urgent task for the experts in this field to provide a better book to help popularize Chinese medicine and enable people to understand its ideas and essence, practice it scientifically, and enjoy it.

Using simple terminology to explain the theories and clinical knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine, *Preliminary Introduction to TCM Theory*, enables the readers to gain a broader understanding of the use of Chinese medical theories in understanding human life, the prevention and treatment of disease. Additionally, it presents knowledge related to the combination of theory and practice, aimed at scientifically guiding the readers to understand Chinese medicine through the systematic introduction of the formation and development of Chinese medicine and its basic characteristics, clinical practice, theoretical concepts and other aspects. With regard to misconceptions about Chinese medicine, the book puts forward the combination of theory and practice and scientifically guides the readers to understand Chinese medicine.

This book covers the basic theories, diagnosis, and treatment of Chinese medicine, such as Yin Yang, the five elements (Wu xing), Zang-fu organs, meridians and collaterals, diagnostic methods, pattern or syndrome differentiation, the combination of Chinese



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medicine formula, as well as healthcare treatments, such as acupuncture, moxibustion, Chinese massage, cupping, and diet theories. The book also introduces a general picture of Chinese medicine from theory to practice, including basic theory and research to clinical application. It fully embodies the holistic concept of Chinese medicine and the characteristics of pattern or syndrome differentiation to determine the treatment.

*Preliminary Introduction to TCM Theory* introduces all these and other aspects of Chinese medicine in accordance to the theoretical system of Chinese Medicine, adhering to the saying “close to reality, life and readers”. In the form of Q & A, this book is rich in content, easy to understand and highly ideological, scientific and practical. It is suitable for the reading material of beginners and physicians of western medicine who are interested in learning Chinese medicine, as well as the majority of Chinese medicine fans. Simultaneously, in order to continuously spread Chinese medicine globally, the book has been compiled in both Chinese and English versions to meet the needs of readers overseas who would like to learn Chinese medicine.

In order to spread and popularize Chinese medicine, the question list in *Preliminary Introduction to TCM Theory* has been amended and refined multiple times. But limitations and inadequacies in this book are inevitable. Please help us by sending in your corrections. They will be greatly appreciated.

I would like to acknowledge the subsidization of Give2Asia by the Asia Foundation and the hard work of every author in the compilation and publication of this book.

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Representative successor of National Intangible Cultural Heritage

(Cognitive Method of Life and Disease in Chinese Medicine)

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## **1. What is traditional Chinese medicine(TCM)?**

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is originated and developed in China. It is a medical science by which the Chinese nation used to study the process of human life, maintain health and fight against disease. TCM is a theoretical system to study the rhythm of life, as well as the occurrence, progress, prevention and treatment of disease. It takes a holistic view as guidance and is based on the physiology and pathology of Zang-fu and the theory of meridians and collaterals with features of determining the treatment according to differentiation of syndrome.

TCM embodies the rich Chinese culture and is a systemic and comprehensive study of medical knowledge, which organically integrates humanism and life sciences.

As a great product of the Chinese nation, and TCM is a priority of Chinese nation with dependent intellectual property right. For thousands of years, it has made significant contributions to the prosperity and development of the Chinese nation, making positive influence on world cultures.

## **2. What are the main features of TCM?**

As a science, TCM has three distinctive features regarding the prevention and treatment of disease.

1) TCM continues to evolve to provide an effective framework for health preservation and medical practice, and form an integration of principles, methods, prescriptions and Chinese herbal medicines. TCM has scientific theory and practice in prevention and treatment of disease.

2) The doctor of TCM focuses on benevolence, virtue, kindness and on attaining high level clinical skills, which are the goals of medical practice and criterion of medical doctor's behavior, and a reflection of noble humane medicine.

3) The four diagnostic methods, integration of principles, methods, prescriptions and herbs, and individual client centered diagnosis and treatment requires high skills. It also emphasizes the combination of logical thinking with deep understanding and forms a thinking mode of diagnosis and treatment based on the differentiation. An artistic connotation exists in the process of diagnosis and treatment indicates.

The features of TCM determine the noble virtue and high skill are the purpose that a doctor seeking to improve people's health.



### **3. What does the holistic concept and determining treatment according to “differentiation of syndromes” mean?**

Two main features and advantages of TCM are the holistic concept and the determination of treatment based on differentiation of syndromes.

**The holistic concept** is a guiding framework for TCM. It has three meanings:

1) The human body is an organic whole. In TCM, the human body has five Zang organs as its central. The six Fu organs, orifices, four limbs, tendons, bones, vessels, muscles, skins and pores are intricately linked with the meridians and collaterals, and circulation of Qi and blood. Essence, Qi, blood, and body fluid are coordinative functional activities of the whole body. This forms an integrative view concept of mind and body.

2) The human body and nature are an organic whole. The changes in nature (such as, the changes of season, day and night and geographical location) directly or indirectly affect the body, and its adaptation. Within the limits of physiology, these changes are normal body responses. Yet, when out of the balance, they become pathological.

3) The human, and social environment are related. The social environment mainly entails social politics, economy, cultural behavior, the mental state and life style of a group of population. As people are part of society, the health state of the body can be influenced by the changes of social environment. Especially societies may influence on health directly or indirectly, including social unrest, development of society, as well as the changes of social positions, poverty, and wealth.

**Determination of treatment according to differentiation of syndromes** is a basic principle in TCM to recognize and treat diseases. It is a unique method to understand and treat disease. Differentiation of syndromes requires making a diagnose of syndrome, This is done with assessment of a summary of the symptoms and signs obtained by the four diagnostic methods (inspection, auscultation and olfaction, inquiring and palpation) and a comprehensive analyses; determination of treatment embodies ascertaining corresponding therapeutic methods in accordance with the findings of differentiation of syndromes.

### **4. What are the advancements of TCM in theory and practice?**

Chinese nation for several thousand years have formed comprehensive system of TCM to promote health and protect against disease. TCM's holistic concept and determination of treatment is based on differentiation of syndromes. With the progress of the society and economy, the changes of living environment and health status of people,

the alteration of disease spectrum and medical mode, the advancements of TCM in theory and practice become much more obvious. These include the following:

1) The dynamic changes of the disease according to the health condition and life information, attach importance to integration of mind and body, use “pre-disease treatment” in health preservation, treatment and rehabilitation, that is, the concept and methods of early intervention with aim of effectively maintaining health and stopping disease progress.

2) Individualized diagnostic and therapeutic modalities based on determination of treatment according to differentiation of syndromes achieves mainly refers to the purpose of improving health care with people orientation through balancing yin and yang and harmonizing zang and fu organs.

3) Attention has been paid to the correspondence of heaven and human, and the harmonious living state of people with the natural world, society and environment, which is being pursued by the people in contemporary era.

4) A variety of diagnostic and therapeutic methods, including Chinese herbal medicine, acupuncture and tuina, help to regulate the body as a whole and stimulate the resistance and the rehabilitation of the body.

5) The diagnostic and therapeutic approaches of TCM can be simply applied in a convenient way. It is cost effect and safe. These aspects are essential to meet the increasing need for better health and services and deal with the rapid development of medicine and rising medical cost.

## **5. What books symbolized the formation of the TCM theory?**

Four books, called the four classics of TCM, symbolized the theoretical system of TCM. They were written in the period of the early Qin Dynasty to the end of Han Dynasty.

The classic book *Huangdi's Internal Classic*, shorten as *Internal Classic*, was developed in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period to the end of Han Dynasty. It includes two parts the *Plain Question* and the *Miraculous Pivot*, with 18 volumes and 162 chapters. This is the first TCM classic book collecting together different schools of thought. It provides a framework for TCM, and discusses the relationships between man and nature, physiology and pathology of the human body, health promotion, and health preservation of the human body, the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diseases. *Internal Classic* reflects the mutual penetration and integration of natural sciences (astronomy, meteorology, calendar algorithm) with philosophy and medicine of ancient China. It states the human being and nature are linked together



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according to the theory of correspondence of the heaven and the human. It also studies the physiological activities and pathological changes of the body with the aim to discover the common principles and laws to provide guidance for the health preservation as well as the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The book *Internal Classic* symbolizes summarization of clinical experiences to become a comprehensive theoretical model of TCM. It established a systematic and holistic theoretical system of TCM.

The book *Difficult Problems Classic*, with the original name *Huangdi's Canon of Eighty-One Difficult Problems*, was written by Bian Que according to the folk, and appeared in the Han Dynasty. The whole book explains the structure, physiology and pathology of the human body. It also discusses the diagnosis, syndromes and treatment in the form of questions and answers. It details the pulse sensation particularly with the method of “feeling pulse only at Cun Kou region”, which laid foundation for pulse-feeling in a widespread fashion.

The book *Treatise on Febrile and Miscellaneous Diseases* written by Zhang Zhongjing (Zhang Ji), at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty consists of two parts: *Treatise on Febrile Diseases* and *Synopsis of the Golden Chamber*. *Treatise on Febrile Diseases* establishes the principles of treatment for febrile diseases according to the theory of differentiation of syndrome based on the six meridians. *Synopsis of the Golden Chamber* describes the principles of determination of treatment according to the differentiation of syndromes, including etiology, syndromes, diagnostic methods, treatment and prevention of internal diseases. This book refers to 40 kinds of diseases and 262 prescriptions, and forms the theoretical system of determining the treatment according to differentiation of syndromes, and lays a solid foundation for the development of clinical medicine in TCM.

The book *Shennong's Herbal Medicine*, shortened as *The Herbal*, appeared in the period of Han Dynasty and Wei Dynasty, with the name from a person called Shennong. Shennong's is the earliest extant monograph of Chinese herbal medicines. The book records 365 sorts of materia medica, which are divided into three classes, that is, superior, medium and inferior in terms of their functions in health preservation, therapeutic treatment and toxicity. The book classifies herbs into four properties: cold, heat, warm and cool. In terms of taste, there are five classifications: sour, bitter, sweet, pungent-spicy and salty. It also puts forward the theories of composing herbal prescription, that is, “harmony and combination of seven emotions”, on which the formation and development of Chinese herbal medicine was grounded.

## 6. What are the health conceptions in TCM?

TCM holds that health consists of the state of health preservation with “integration of sky





and human”, the life style with “physical and mental oneness” and the functional condition of body with “there would not be any diseases with strong anti-pathogenic Qi.” It covers life quality and health state as well as physical health, mental state and social adaptability, etc.

“Integration of heaven and human” means individual life style should be adjusted with the natural laws. In TCM, people are the products of the nature, therefore the functional activities of the human body are inevitably affected by the natural and social environment.

“Physical and mental oneness” denotes the organic connection between the body and mind. It is an advanced concept to maintain holistic health and a good living state.

“There would not be any disease with strong anti-pathogenic Qi” stresses the resistance of the body and keeping a healthy state can defend the body from an attack of external pathogenic factors or the occurrence of diseases.

## 7. How do TCM understand the human body?

TCM takes the five Zang (liver, heart, spleen, lung and kidney) as a core. The five zang connect with the six Fu (gallbladder, small intestine, stomach, large intestine, bladder and sanjiao), five tissues (tendon, vessel, muscle, skin and bone), and orifices (eye, tongue, mouth, nose, ear, anterior orifice and post orifice). They are all connected through the meridians and collaterals, forming a mutually related and inseparable organic whole. Qi, blood and body fluid are the material foundations for the physiological activities of the body, which undergo metabolism through the physiological activities of the Zang-fu organs. The five Zang organs are related with body liquids, such as tears, sweat, saliva, discharge of nose, and sputum, (five fluids). Also the five zang organs are closely linked to the emotions, such as overjoy, anger, melancholy, worry, grief, fear and fright (so called seven emotional factors). The seven emotions are the functional manifestations of the Zang-fu organs on the exterior, while the emotional changes may be the pathogenic factors to affect Zang-fu functioning.

## 8. What is Zang Xiang theory?

“Zang Xiang” has three meanings: first, it refers to the form and location of the Zang-fu organs in the body; second, it shows the manifestations of the physiological functions and pathological changes of the Zang-fu organs on the exterior; third, it reveals the interrelationships between changes in nature, physiological functions and pathological changes of the Zang-fu organs. In addition, it outlines the corresponding laws between the Zang-fu organs and the five directions, five seasons, five flavors, five