

Spring 2014

Health Action

A Non-Profit Project of Health Action Network Society (HANS)
Information Education Action

Spring Clean Your Career,
Your Office, Your Water

Shedding Light on
Vitamin Bashing

Sleep Well:
Insomnia Relief
for All Ages

Sick Home Office:
A New 21st Century
Syndrome

Struggling with
Incontinence?
Stop Unwanted
Leakage

Ferulic Acid for
Natural Sun
Protection

Support **HANS**—Your
Natural Health Network p 13

Looking for a Practitioner, Product or Service?
Visit the HANS Wellness Directory p 28





The Real Meaning of Chinese Medicine

by Dr. Chun-Kai Wang

Chinese medicine has a long history and it comes from China—this is about as much as the average Joe knows. Despite the popularity of Chinese medicine these days, we need to set some things straight so this ancient healing system doesn't end up popular for the wrong reasons.

What is Chinese medicine?

Chinese medicine is as the name suggests: medicine from China. By medicine, we mean natural medicinal plants cultivated more or less in China.

Chinese medicine is all about balance, yin-yang and the five elements, right?

While true to certain degrees, I avoid such terms, because it speaks nothing of what Chinese medicine really is. I'd like to rather put it short and blunt: Chinese medicine treats disease, period. By disease, I mean real diseases and conditions, ones that patients will have to be given drugs and even surgery for, without sufficient guarantees of any degree of alleviation. It also includes maladies that you may be told are "all in your head," when you know very well it isn't.

"Chinese medicine uses many endangered species and exotic ingredients."

Bear gallbladder, deer antler, scorpions, geckos and tiger bones are what come to mind when some people think of Chinese medicine. I'll straighten things out

here: the true orthodox lineage of Chinese medicine does not use such items. Chinese medicine is 99 percent herbal; only about one percent is comprised of common animal-derived and earth-mineral ingredients such as ground oyster shells and ground gypsum. Such items are only employed in special circumstances. Please bear this in mind: Chinese medicine is a clinical science, not witchcraft.

"Chinese medicine is a bunch of unscientific folk remedies."

My *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* defines science as a "branch of knowledge involving systematized observation and experiment." Chinese medicine, like any discipline, is a branch of knowledge. People were using Chinese medicine to treat infectious diseases in a systematized fashion at least 2,000 years ago. Chinese medicine has been experimented on the people of East Asia for at least just as long. Not science, you say?

"Chinese medicine is not safe because it hasn't gone through controlled double-blind studies."

Chinese medicine is only unsafe if the practitioner doesn't have a license and isn't educated well enough to be practising with sound knowledge of Chinese medicine and its diagnostic protocols.

As for double-blind studies, we are really comparing more than 2,000 years of clinical herbal experience from human experimentation versus comparatively small pharmaceutical studies on lab rats,

with funding from sometimes suspicious sources.

Modern medical science is only a branch of knowledge just like everything else. Using it to criticize and evaluate the science of Chinese medicine is like an electrician telling a plumber how to do his job.

What about acupuncture?

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine are Oriental medical modalities, but acupuncture technically is not part of Chinese medicine. The core theory and therapeutic method are not entirely the same: acupuncture uses needles and Chinese medicine uses herbs. Furthermore, both modalities treat different things. For example, acupuncture is great for simple musculoskeletal and joint injuries and conditions, while internal systemic diseases or "internal medicine" is practically and exclusively the forte of Chinese medicine. Historically, both disciplines belong to different schools of thought and developed independently from one another. It's important to know that while both types of therapies can be used in conjunction, Chinese medicine is still Chinese medicine, and acupuncture is still acupuncture. ☉

Dr. Chun-Kai Wang is a licensed doctor of traditional Chinese medicine who practises internal medicine. He is also a lecturer at PCU College of Holistic Medicine. www.drwang.ca (604) 836-3968

"Chinese medicine, like any discipline, is a branch of knowledge."