

Exploration on Relationship between Traditional Chinese Medicine and Traditional Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

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Abstract: Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and traditional Chinese culture (TCC) influence and interact with each other. On one hand, three cultural backgrounds constituted by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism provide rich nutrition and details for TCM; the various cultures in different historical periods in ancient China also profoundly influence and positively facilitate the development in TCM; traditional Chinese philosophies also have great theoretical significance toward the development in TCM. On the other hand, TCM serves as a potent practical basis for TCC and a key carrier for the development in TCC. From the perspective of history, TCM and TCC correlate and influence each other, thus forming an interactive relationship. Exploration on relationship between TCC and TCM not only has a positive significance to the development in TCM itself but also can inherit and enrich TCC and demonstrate our national cultural confidence. Therefore, the development in TCM nowadays should pay attention to not only its natural scientific attribute but also its humanistic attribute. The relationship between TCM and TCC has been explored for your reference herein from the perspective of cultural confidence.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM); Traditional Chinese culture (TCC) and cultural confidence

Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is correlated with traditional Chinese culture (TCC). The earliest records on TCM theories within China can date back to the Spring and Autumn Period. Enriched by the spiritual nutrition from TCM, the modern Chinese medicine (MCM) has become a unique theory of TCC. Therefore, the integration of TCC into TCM teaching and learning not only facilitates the development in TCM but also improves students' self-confidence and national cultural identity. However, many students under current education system have gradually developed a conceptual and logic-based thinking pattern and knowledge structure under the impact of modern science and technology, such as mathematics and chemistry, as well as subject to the long-term influence of modern science, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. Therefore, a poor understanding and absorption in TCC has led to an insufficient comprehension of the theoretical knowledge on TCM and even a loss of interest in learning TCM.

1. Influence from Traditional Chinese Medicine on Traditional Chinese Culture

The advent and development of TCM are correlated with the ancient traditional culture. Therefore, to integrate TCM into TCC can not only expand the influence from TCC but also point out a beneficial direction for the development in TCM. First of all, TCM serves as not only a life science but also a valuable cultural reservoir. TCM is manifested eminently in its combination between theory and practice, which not only enhances the practical attribute of TCC but also expands the traditional Chinese philosophies in practice, thus enriching our traditional culture connotation^[1]. For example, the conceptual scope applicable to TCM is different from that of traditional Chinese philosophy (TCP). However, TCPs, including religious thoughts, history and culture, have been transformed and applied by TCM to a great extent. TCM endows medicine with its own special connotation. It plays a positive role in enriching and developing TCC, which is also the key role of TCM in TCC. In addition, the further development in TCM plays a critical role in the formation and development of TCC. The inclusive TCM stands as

one of the most representative TCCs. “TCM practitioners knows astronomy and geography, human affairs as well as Yin vs Yang from small flowers and plants toward broad music and rhythm. TCM encompasses five main organs inside human body and the meridians and collaterals, and the three religions and the nine schools of thoughts. In brief, it involves all. ” Therefore, one shall not just take TCM from the perspective of medicine but understand it in the aspect of TCC and regard it as a miniature of TCC.

2. Influence of Traditional Chinese Culture upon Formation and Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine is rooted in China and influenced by TCC, which finally develops into TCM culture. To some extent, the development and growth of Chinese medicine are also the development and growth of a kind of culture. It can be seen from the history of TCM theory and the historical evolution of traditional Chinese thoughts that TCM stays consistent with TCC during the historical process lasting over two thousand years. The synchronism is mainly reflected in two aspects. The first one is the identical attribute. The transformation of traditional Chinese concepts is also reflected in medicine. For example, theories of “connectivity between the outside and the inside”, “reasoning by analogy” and “analogy” from the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period to the Qin and Han dynasties all belong to the “Monism of Qi”^[2]. Second, the peak of TCM coincides with the peak of ancient philosophies. During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, the contention among one hundred schools of thoughts marked the first ideological and cultural peak in China. TCM also saw a great development during the same period and rolled out four grand classics in the field of Chinese medicine. To sum up, TCM has always kept abreast with TCC.

2.1 Influence of Traditional Chinese Philosophy upon Traditional Chinese Medicine

TCP serves as the essence of Chinese culture as well as the spirit and soul of the Chinese nation. TCP works as the fundamental guidance and the main line of theoretical system of TCM as a whole, and lays a cornerstone for the continuous improvement, enrichment, development and innovation in TCM. During the development of TCM, the role of TCP has no longer been limited to researching the world outlook, the epistemology, the methodology, etc. of traditional medicine but also been able to adopt as a tool for deduction to explore insights of theoretical system of TCM. A set of clinical TCM practice system can be established through the guidance of such ideological system based on syndrome differentiation. It can be said that all major breakthroughs in the medical theory and the great progress achieved in the clinical practice are inextricably correlated with TCP.

2.2 Influence from Cultures in Different Historical Periods upon Traditional Chinese Medicine

First of all, the first cultural peak of TCM theories in ancient China was established from the Spring and Autumn Period to the Qin and Han Dynasties. During this period of time, TCC reached its heyday due to political stability and, in the form of materialism, laid a good foundation for the development in TCM. Secondly, from the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties to the Sui and Tang Dynasties, there was a great integration of ethnic cultures, namely, the differentiation, integration and clinical development of TCM. During the same period of time, the history and culture of China demonstrated a distinctive integration characteristic. Meanwhile, western ideas and culture began to be introduced into the Central Plains gradually. Thus, integration became a key feature of Chinese history and culture then. It can be seen that the integration between Chinese and Western cultures is a key factor for TCM differentiation and clinical medicine development^[3]. Finally, during the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, Chinese history and culture generated many different trends of thoughts. Dominated by Neo-Confucianism, there was an ideological contention concerning Neo-Confucianism and many academic schools concerning TCM were also formed. It was just because of the historical and cultural phenomena concerning those contentions that has resulted in the development in TCM.

2.3 Influence from Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism upon Traditional Chinese Medicine

TCM has developed under the common leadership and influence from Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. From the perspective of space, the aforesaid three factors are key components that constitute the basic theoretical system of TCM. On this basis, Taoism has formed the epistemology, the methodology, the outlook on life and the fundamental matters of TCM^[4]. The core of Confucianism is to construct the theoretical system and solve the problem on “discourse power” of TCM. Confucian philosophy has developed a complete set of scientific TCM system, and represented to a certain extent the “discourse power” of TCM. The medical techniques, prescriptions and regimens from Buddhism have exerted a certain influence on TCM.

However, the profound Taoist philosophy and the rigorous Confucianism have endowed the theoretical system of TCM with rich connotation. Due to its rigorous system and thought depth, Buddhism cannot be integrated into the theoretical system of TCM but play an ancillary role.

3. Value Embodiment of Traditional Chinese Culture in Traditional Chinese Medicine Education

3.1 Help students to establish a TCM-based thinking pattern

3.1.1 Experiential Thinking

Experiential thinking refers to a thinking pattern derived from induction, categorization, comparison and accumulation of various experiences^[5]. The thinking pattern of TCM generally stems from TCP and the essence of TCM lies in the philosophy on life. TCP develops upon the life experiences in spirit, vitality, Yin vs Yang, life, mind, emotion, consciousness and temperament. It follows the process of thinking from the exterior to the interior and from subject to object, extracting essence from raw materials, and eliminating the false and retaining the true. In this way, it gradually builds up a cognitive network concerning the essential connection between matters and human beings, and finally connects heaven and earth, returns to the heart of self, and integrates ego with all.

3.1.2 Imagery Thinking

Serving as a unique thinking pattern in TCC, imagery thinking can elaborate the profound reasons of TCP in depth. During the integration between and education of TCM, imagery thinking can provide students with an image-oriented thinking pattern. The dynamic, intuitive and unified features of imagery thinking and integral thinking in TCM are Yin vs Yang, five elements, eight-diagram-shaped appetizer, heavenly stems and earthly branches, etc. , which have had a great influence on TCM and laid a solid foundation for the thinking pattern in TCM. The media of imagery thinking are symbols and metaphors. Insusceptible to logic, it can monitor the physiological functions of human body and detect its pathological changes in time. It is necessary to develop an objective logical thinking in order to detect the disease in patients and to guarantee the correct diagnosis and therapy.

3.2 Enhance the training of traditional medical ethics among students.

Traditional medical ethics adhere to the basic ideas of “valuing righteousness, bashing profitability, and emphasizing and correcting integrity on one’s own”, the spiritual values of “a healer for all mankind”, and the ideological essence of “a healer for goodness”. The proverb “healing goes first” means to abide by the principle that only life is the most important issue^[6]. During thousands of years of development in TCM, traditional medical ethics have endowed practitioners with a sort of spiritual strength that enables them to continuously improve their medical skills and establish an ethical concept of “honoring people” that conforms to TCC. TCC attaches importance to “self-cultivation”. Such concepts of “people-oriented” and “governing people with virtue” are the embodiment of moral self-discipline. Also, “benevolent medical skills” form a part of TCM morality. They are consistent with the professional and functional features of medical industry, and a key component to sustain the traditional medical ethics. They are not only a key practice of Confucianism in patient healing and life saving process but also a comprehensive implementation of the thought on “benevolence”. The integration between “benevolence” and “medicine” embodies the feature of “the virtue in sparing both human and animal lives” of doctors.

3.3 Stimulate students’ passion for learning.

TCC has gradually transformed into western scientific knowledge in the aspect of literature, history, philosophy, mathematics, theory, chemistry, etc. , thus forming the concept of amount with “quantity” as its core and the thinking pattern of “analytic reduction”^[7]. However, subject to the Western modern thoughts, when it comes to the real clinical practice, students will still feel at a loss and even doubt the efficacy of TCM. In this case, the knowledge learned in class will turn into a tool for examination and show no practical value. The current education system in China hardly teaches any thoughts, wisdom, philosophy and other aspects of TCC, which leaves TCC to be rejected gradually and even abandoned completely. Therefore, TCM and even the whole education system concerning TCM should pay attention to integrating the thoughts of TCC into TCM teaching, deepen the understanding of TCM among students, stimulate their passion for learning, and thus facilitate the development and inheritance of TCM^[8].

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, to apply TCC into TCM teaching can not only help students to realize the objective laws of TCM diagnosis

and pathology but also facilitate them in integrating TCC into their spiritual core under the influence of traditional medical ethics, so as to have a deeper understanding of TCC. For students in TCM major, to learn TCC will help them to establish their own thinking patterns, develop the traditional medical ethics, mobilize their passion for learning, and thus drive the development and inheritance of TCM.

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