

Academic Exploration

Roles and Implications of Paper Media in Early Stage of Integration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine in China

LI Meng¹, GUO Yan², and WENG Pan-feng³

ABSTRACT Paper media including the *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Health News* and *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* were the main media that spread the thought and policy of integrative medicine (IM) in the early stage of the integration of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and Western medicine (WM) in China. Issues including paper media and its roles for spreading IM, from "TCM learning from WM" to "WM learning from TCM", advocating integration of TCM and WM, promoting IM through multiple channels were analyzed in this article, so as to show the propagation process of IM in China and the roles of the paper media. It was shown that strengthening the propaganda of IM through mainstream media, strengthening media convergence and the role of new media are important in spreading the thought of IM.

KEYWORDS paper media, integrated traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine, implications

In the early years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the thought and policy of integrative medicine (IM) had been gradually formed and developed with the unremitting supports by the first-generation central leadership of new China including MAO Ze-dong and ZHOU En-lai. Under the historical conditions of new China, the paper media had become the main media to spread the thoughts of IM. We have investigated the propaganda of the IM thoughts and policies by paper media at that period (1949–1966) through literature collecting from "Duxiu" and "China National Knowledge Infrastructure".

Paper Media Plays Its Roles in Spreading IM

It is a tradition advocated by the Chinese Communist Party to attach importance to the use of newspapers and other media to publicize the party's policies. There was no professional media of IM at the early stage of China, so *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, the official newspapers naturally undertook the task of spreading the thought, policy and academic exchange of IM. This became an important characteristic of the propaganda of the IM at the initial stage of new China.

People's Daily is the most influential newspaper in China. Since the 1950s, *People's Daily* has published a large number of articles and reports on the concept, policies, curative effect and cases of IM, playing an

important role in the popularization of IM. The term "IM" was firstly used in a paper published in *People's Daily* entitled with "the Dissemination of Experience in Treating Hemorrhoid Fistula by traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)" on September 24, 1955. In this paper, the author reported the methods and experience of treating hemorrhoid fistula by the combination of TCM and Western medicine (WM).⁽¹⁾

There were a total of 95 IM related articles published in *People's Daily* from 1949 to 1966. With further analysis, the main contents of the 95 articles were: propaganda of IM policies, treatment methods, experts introduction, IM related events, reports on achievements and curative effect of IM, especially the reports of major conferences and relevant speeches. All of these have effectively promoted the development of IM.

Guangming Daily is one of the major

©The Chinese Journal of Integrated Traditional and Western Medicine Press and Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2019

1. School of Marxism, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an (710049), China; 2. Chinese Journal of Integrated Traditional and Western Medicine Press, Beijing (100091), China; 3. Health and Life Ethics Center, Wenzhou Medical University, Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province (325000), China

Correspondence to: Dr. WENG Pan-feng, E-mail: wengpanfeng@126.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11655-019-3225-1>

newspapers in China, which has also played an important role in spreading the policy, theory and academic thoughts of IM. *Health News* is a professional newspaper with the main content of disseminating medical and health information. *Health News* also played an important role in spreading IM due to its professional perspectives. The *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* had been the major journal for the dissemination of IM for a long time after the founding of the People's Republic of China. We found that "IM" firstly appeared in a professional medical journal in 1955, in the 6th issue of *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*.⁽²⁾ After a search on the *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, we found 206 articles were published related to "IM", "unity of TCM and WM", "cooperation between TCM and WM". The main contents were the publicity of TCM policies, theoretical researches, clinical researches and case reports. This journal has played an important role in the communication between TCM and WM.

From "TCM Learning from WM" to "WM Learning from TCM"

Facing the economically poor and culturally blank situation at the beginning of China, the central government established the health policy of "unity of TCM and WM". On June 8, 1950, *Health News* published an article entitled "Unity of TCM and WM and issues of the further study of TCM physicians", calling for strengthening such unity. In that article, the author stated that "it is not enough to rely on the existing twenty thousands of formal WM doctors" to solve the problems of public health at that time, therefore, "the twenty thousands of WM doctors and hundreds of thousands of TCM doctors must unite together, help each other, so that the problem can only be solved."⁽³⁾ An editorial entitled with "Right direction for people's health work" was published in *People's Daily*, on October 23, 1950. The editorial pointed out that the scientization of TCM is an urgent problem to solve, if modern science and technology can be used to improve and transform TCM, it would surely make new progress.⁽⁴⁾ However, due to the wrong guidance of the health department leaders at that time and the lack of guarantee of relevant systems, this project did not achieve the desired effect.

On October 20, 1954, the *People's Daily* published an editorial entitled "Pushing the correct policy towards TCM", in which discrimination against

TCM was severely criticized and the WM doctors were required to study TCM so as to give full play to the collation and development of TCM by modern science and medicine.⁽⁵⁾ There is no doubt about that TCM has played an important role in people's health. However, the shortcoming of TCM is also obvious. If we still stay conservative, it will only greatly limit the long-term development of TCM. We should not only fully understand the contribution of TCM, but also face up to its shortcomings. This should be a basic attitude towards TCM.⁽⁶⁾

Using modern scientific methods to study TCM objectively requires mastering the two academic systems of TCM and WM, and elimination of discrimination and prejudice against TCM is the prerequisite and necessary condition to carry out the integration.⁽⁷⁾ As mentioned in above editorial published in *People's Daily*, actively carrying out the "WM learning from TCM" is the key to solve the problem that CM is not understood and valued by WM.⁽⁵⁾ From the "TCM Learning from WM" to "WM Learning from TCM", reflected that the central government proceed from the reality, twisted deviation and corrected mistakes, and promoted the unity of TCM and WM, the basis of IM. The media such as *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, and *Health News* actively spread the policies and played an important role in the implement of IM.

Advocating Integration of TCM and WM Based on Reality

Although TCM and WM are different, they have the same purpose. One editorial entitled with "Pushing the correct policy towards TCM" in *People's Daily* held the ideas: we must fully consider the different characteristics of TCM and WM, in the process of combining TCM and WM, focus more on the characteristics of TCM, give full play to their respective special skills; we should summarize the experiences of consultation in TCM and WM, create a new experience in a planned way.⁽⁵⁾ An editorial titled "Main tasks of promoting TCM at present" was published in *Health News* on January 7, 1955. This editorial laid out specific arrangements on how to implement the TCM policy, and required the health departments to actively promote the following work, including: 1) establishing research institutions for TCM research; 2) introducing TCM doctors to participate in clinical treatment; 3) expanding and improving TCM business; 4) improving further education of TCM; 5)

strengthening management of TCM; 6) collating and publishing TCM books; 7) strengthening the guidance and liaison of mass organizations of TCM and WM.⁽³⁾ This series of measures showed a great influence in spreading and publicizing the integration of TCM and WM among ordinary people and professionals.

On December 19, 1955, China Academy of TCM was founded, and *Health News* published an editorial titled "An important measure to promote the medical heritage of China", which considered that its establishment "is a major event in Chinese people's health care, as well as a significant event in Chinese medical science." TCM and WM should unite with each other, study the medical heritage of China together, and "change the backwardness of TCM for many years".⁽⁸⁾ *Guangming Daily* published an editorial of "Actively promoting the WM learning from TCM" on November 4, 1955, which profoundly pointed out that "TCM can cure many diseases without providing scientific explanations, which requires WM to learn and study together with TCM. If scientific explanations could be found, medicine could also be improved for one step."⁽⁸⁾

Continue Carrying out "WM Learning from TCM", Promoting IM through Multiple Pathways

In 1958, the leading party group of the ministry of health suggested full-time workshop for further study of "WM learning from TCM" could be held all around in China, in the report of "Status, achievements and experience of full-time workshop for further study of WM learning from TCM".⁽⁹⁾ This proposal was highly appreciated by MAO Ze-dong on November 28 in the same year, *People's Daily* published an editorial entitled with "Intensively develop the project of WM learning from TCM". This editorial pointed out, seriously and actively organizing the project of WM learning from TCM was a political mission. The activity of WM learning from TCM made "many Western doctors have preliminarily mastered the knowledge of TCM and learned to apply it to treat diseases for the people".⁽¹⁰⁾ On December 3 in 1958, *Health News* published an editorial entitled with "Mass movement is needed to implement the TCM policy", in which it required health departments of all levels in China to actively implement the TCM policy and strengthen the propaganda.⁽³⁾

The concept of IM has gone through a process from practice to theory, from theory to practice and

then back to theory. A large number of articles published in these paper media vividly reflect this process, and from one side showed the historical route in which our party and the country constantly explored and practiced, corrected mistakes and returned to the right path, summarized experience and formed theories during leading the development of IM in China. These have important implications for us to do the work well of IM under the new historical conditions.

Continue Strengthening Propaganda of IM through Mainstream Media

As a practical subject, communication sciences and its theories have certain guiding significance for the spread of IM. According to the agenda setting theory of this discipline, the media is an important source of information and influence for the public to perceive the society, and it always influences the public's perception of the external environment imperceptibly. In the initial stage of IM, the related thoughts and policies are still in the formation and experimental stage, people generally do not understand the ideas of IM, under that condition, *People's Daily* and other media have played an indelible role. The interaction between these media and practice, policy and medical personnel, has played an important role in the publicity of IM, promoting the emergence and development of IM.

At present, the IM has formed a complete system from clinical and experimental research to education. Although time has changed, we still face many new challenges and questions. In the context of "healthy China" advocated by the state, how to further solve the communication problems of the IM policies and academic thoughts? There is no doubt that the mainstream media will exert an important role, as they have lots of readers with high education, and also own a good reputation and influence on the decision-making departments. Related departments and the *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, and other mainstream media, should set the agenda and publish influential articles about the questions and challenges in the policy formulation and implementation of IM. This may provide good public opinion guidance for relevant policies about IM. Through the emphasis on the topic of IM, these mainstream media may play a role in triggering public's thinking, cultivating their cognitive mode, strengthening the public's cognition on specific

issues, so as to strengthen the dissemination of the idea of IM.

Strengthen Media Convergence and Encourage Role of New Media in Spreading Thought of IM

In the era of media convergence, the role of new media in the dissemination of IM cannot be ignored. Communication science believes that due to the limitations of people's life span, things that people can truly experience and feel are very few. As a tool of information exchange, the media have greatly expanded people's horizons and provided possibilities for people to feel more things. However, it is undeniable that what the people perceived is not the real world itself, but the "simulated environment" provided by the media after various processing and reconstruction. In brief, a "simulated environment" is one that reconstructed by people based on the information available to them, and it is not a reality environment. In the context of media convergence, the Internet is changing people's cognition of the world with its mass information, immediacy, interactivity and other characteristics, exerting more and more profound influence on human life. People use new media to receive and disseminate information also shows a growing trend. It can be said that in today's social life, people are more living in the new "simulated environment" shaped by new media. Therefore, regarding to the dissemination of IM, it not only needs to strengthen the propaganda of the mainstream media, but also rely on the new media in which a new communication mode or method should be gradually formed so as to bring innovation and breakthrough to IM.

IM is a highly specialized discipline, the general public are lack of in-depth understanding and recognition about it. In the new media era, thought and knowledge can be spread through social networking platforms such as microblog, Wechat, App, etc. By focusing on the different needs of different groups, and spreading the targeted contents in a directional and interactive way, we can build a professional resources sharing platform. And we can also cooperate with some medical knowledge sharing platform with a great number of readers like Dingxiangyuan App, to spread the ideas and cases of IM and popularize IM science regularly. On the contents, because the

principle of "customers first" is a main characteristic of new media, we should deliver high quality content for public with a more readable language style, so as to spread the ideas and popularization of science related to IM. By this way, with the help of new media, IM can be spread to the public globally and no longer just stay in professional journals, being widely recognized and accepted by public.

Conflict of Interest

All the authors have no conflicts of interest.

Author Contributions

Li M and Weng PF designed the research; Guo Y performed the research; Li M and Weng PF wrote the paper.

REFERENCES

1. Bo S. Spread of experience of TCM in treating hemorrhoids and fistulas. *People's Daily* (Chin) 1955-09-24(3).
2. Li WR. Observation on the effects of acupuncture of 324 cases. *J Tradit Chin Med* (Chin) 1955;5:38-41.
3. Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China. Compilations of TCM working documents 1949–1983. 1985:54-59.
4. The Group of *People's Daily's* Complete Collections of Editorials. Period of economic recovery and socialist reform of the Republic of China. *People's Daily*. Beijing: *People's Daily Press*;2013:305.
5. *People's Daily* Editorial. Implementing the correct policy of treating TCM. *People's Daily* (Chin) 1954-10-20(1).
6. Zhang CB, Li EC. Improving the level and quality of ethics review in Chinese medicine and integrative medicine. *Chin J Integr Med* 2018;24:315-319.
7. Weng PF, Li EC, Zhuang XZ. The first generation of new China leaders' thought of developing integrated Chinese and West medicine. *Chin J Integr Med* 2018;24:385-389.
8. Compilation of working data of traditional Chinese medicine. Volume 1. Beijing: Ministry of health of the People's Republic of China;1956:23,11.
9. Literature Research Department of CCCPC. Important documents selected and compiled since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Volume IX. Beijing: China Literature Publishing Press;2011:493-497.
10. *People's Daily* Editorial. Vigorously develop the movement of "Western medicine learning from Traditional Chinese Medicine". *People's Daily* (Chin) 1958-11-28(1).

(Accepted June 30, 2019)
Edited by WANG Wei-xia