

## Book Review

# Evidence-Based Clinical Chinese Medicine: Novel Exploration through Global Vision

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In 2008, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University, Australia) and the Guangdong Provincial Hospital of Chinese Medicine (GPHCM, China) initiated an international cooperation network for evidence-based clinical Chinese medicine (CM). Based on the exciting successful collaboration, the establishment of China-Australia International Research Centre for Chinese Medicine (the Centre) supported by both institutions was approved by the government in 2013. The Centre aims to collaborate in evidence-based CM practice, research and education, including compiling a series of evidence-based clinical CM monographs *Evidence-Based Clinical Chinese Medicine* (edited by LU Chuan-jian and XUE Charlie Changli, published by People's Medical Publishing House in Beijing and World Scientific Publishing Company in Singapore, respectively). Unlike other evidence-based monographs, this collection initially uses the 'whole evidence' approach to explore evidence for the value of traditional practice under the features of CM. Here is where this collection proves its worth.

### Comprehensive Exploration through 'Whole Evidence' Approach

The collection consists of 29 monographs. Each focuses on a condition and systematically presents its existing evidence, not only including conventional randomized controlled trials, but also text books, expert consensus and clinical guidelines in Chapter 2, ancient treatment experience and evidence in Chapter 3, and pre-clinical evidence of frequently used herb in Chapter 6. They are *Acne Vulgaris, Adult Asthma, Allergic Rhinitis, Alzheimer's disease, Atopic Dermatitis, Cancer Pain, Cervical Spondylitis, Chronic Cough, Chronic Heart Failure, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Urticaria, Colorectal Cancer, Diabetes, Diabetic Kidney Disease, Endometriosis, Herpes Zoster and Post-herpetic Neuralgia, Insomnia, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Menopause, Migraine Headache, Obesity, Post-stroke Shoulder Complications, Post-stroke*

*Spasticity, Psoriasis Vulgaris, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Sinusitis, Unipolar Depression, Urinary Tract Infection, and Vascular Dementia.*

It was not until 20th century that evidence-based medicine (EBM) was introduced into CM. However, CM practice is mainly experience-oriented and there are not enough high-quality clinical trials in typical hierarchical EBM model. This collection really arrives in time and brings out the so called 'whole evidence' approach. Looking into the current status and unique features of CM, the approach is used to provide an integration of various types and levels of evidence to optimize decision-making to benefit the patients.

The collection is nothing short of comprehensive underlying the 'whole evidence' approach. Each monograph starts with an overview of how the condition is currently managed in both Chinese and Western medicine. It presents the disease burden, pathogenesis, diagnosis and treatment of the condition based on clinical guidelines, textbooks and expert consensus. Next comes with the analysis of the condition in historical citations based on the systematic search of classic medical books. This provides an insightful view for



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how the condition has been understood and treated in ancient times. At the same time, systematic reviews of modern clinical studies for CM therapies are provided. This is helpfully broken into categories like Chinese herbal medicine treatments, acupuncture therapies, other CM treatments and more. For complete coverage, the monograph also offers reviews of top frequently used herbs. This includes their pharmacological effects in pre-clinical experiments regarding their possible action mechanisms. Besides, a summary of all above evidence and all included methodology is given which helps guide future research and clinical practice.

### Mutual Validation from Ancient Wisdom to Scientific Understanding

Most medical traditions focus on the record of certain syndromes and their causes by which people analyze and handle problems in the medical practice. However, the medical environment and concept in ancient times are different from nowadays that some of the disease described is not totally consistent or even inconsistent with today's diagnosis. Therefore, the authors innovatively established a diagnosis similarity evaluation system for included conditions based on modern development, in terms of disease names, related symptoms and signs, along with medical history and other useful diagnostic information. They did a systematic search of *Encyclopedia of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (Zhong Hua Yi Dian) which includes more than 1000 ancient medical books, and analyzed the descriptions of the condition based on the above system. These analyses provide an overview of understanding and management of the condition in CM throughout the history.

From scientific understanding perspectives, the authors did a systematic review of CM interventions derived from modern literature. Different study types including randomized controlled studies, non-randomized controlled studies and non-controlled studies are 'pooled' for analysis based on the universal EBM methods mainly constructed by the Cochrane Collaboration. Combined with pharmacological evidence, these pooled analyses bridge a knowledge gap that they provide highly reliable results for effective use of many available therapies used in CM. Also, the various types of evidence are arranged hierarchically according to the strength in the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE), which provides by far the most systematic and objective assessments on the overall CM therapies.

### Accessible Promotion under Global Vision

This collection is jointly written by Australia and Chinese authors. Members of editorial and advisory board are well organized as follows: Project Planning Committee is composed of Prof. Peter J Coloe from RMIT University, Prof. LYU Yu-bo and Prof. CHEN Da-can from GPHCM, Prof. Charlie Changli Xue from RMIT University and Prof. LU Chuan-jian from GPHCM are co-Editors-in-Chief. Lead Authors are experts and specialists from the corresponding clinical department from GPHCM and complementary research project from RMIT. The Expert Advisory Panel is a group of invited experts to provide advice on scientific issues about clinical medicine and methodology. They play an important part in maintaining the quality of the book.

Note that this collection is available both in Chinese and English, they can benefit the varied targeted audience like patients, practitioners, and educators worldwide. Moreover, the Centre developed a set of step-by-step standard operating procedure (SOP) on how to perform the 'whole evidence' approach, and plans to publish it to encourage and inspire more research entities to join in and accelerate the evidence-based progress of CM.

As one of the world's ancient medical sciences, CM with its accumulation of knowledge on human health over millennia is believed to make invaluable contributions to our healthcare. Since the late 20th century, CM has been gaining popularity and interest globally. Due to a lack of high quality evidence, CM today is facing unprecedented challenges. However, EBM gives a new opportunity to ancient CM to develop from EBM (like other traditional medicines) into a new evidence-based phase, to achieve more high quality fruits by systematically assessing the accumulations, distinguishing real and false. Only in this way can it move forward, evolve and get her new life like phoenix nirvana.

Recently, I was told the amazing news that two volumes (*Vascular Dementia*, *Allergic Rhinitis*) have won the National Academic Publishing Fund. All this make me convinced that this collection represent a major milestone in CM development and will make a great contribution to the evidence-based CM development globally. I highly recommend this collection and look forward to future books to come.

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