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• Global Views

Chinese integrative medicine: inclusion of a Chinese medicine programme in a conventional medical institute

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ABSTRACT: To meet community demands with optimal Chinese and conventional medical treatment, the University of Hong Kong is promoting integrative medicine by developing Chinese medicine programmes that train students of both Western and Chinese medicine. The programmes emphasize multi-disciplinary training and interaction between the two therapeutic approaches, enabling students to establish reliable, consistent, and respectful mutual cooperation in their future careers.

KEYWORDS: education, medical; integrative medicine; medicine, Chinese traditional; The University of Hong Kong

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1 Introduction

Integrative medicine, recently advocated in the West, is best defined as “*the practice of medicine that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between practitioner and patient, focuses on the whole person, is informed by evidence, and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, healthcare professionals, and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.*”^[1] According to the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine, over 50 universities and institutions, including Harvard University, Stanford University, and the University of Maryland, have established integrative medicine centers in North America^[2-4].

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) School of Chinese Medicine (SCM) was formally established in 2002 under

the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine. In accord with community needs and Chinese Medicine Ordinances, we educate Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) and promote the development and practice of evidence-based integrative medicine. Currently, we offer full-time programmes in Chinese medicine for undergraduates and postgraduates; we also provide Chinese medicine courses for students in other medical departments and schools.

According to the Hong Kong law, CMPs and Western medical professionals (WMPs) must practice within the boundaries of their own fields. However, the needs of the community demand integrative treatments that combine both Chinese and conventional medicine. It is our mission to promote collaboration between the two disciplines. This produces optimal service for patients and nurtures qualified, well-prepared medical practitioners. We have designed a series of specific integrative medicine courses



that enhance the biomedical knowledge of students of Chinese medicine, provide Chinese medicine training for students of conventional medicine, and promote interaction among medical students from a variety of departments and schools, including the School of Chinese Medicine, the School of Nursing, the Department of Pharmacology and Pharmacy, and the Department of Family and Community Medicine.

2 Enhancing conventional medical knowledge in students of Chinese medicine

The Bachelor of Chinese Medicine (BCMed) programme has been successfully offered by SCM for over ten years. The programme comprises professional and common core curriculum courses and language enhancement courses. We emphasize courses in the theory and practice of Chinese medicine and classical Chinese medicine texts, and also give students clinical and laboratory experience in conventional medicine settings.

2.1 Laboratory experience in conventional medicine settings

In the BCMed programme, such biomedical courses as anatomy, physiology, immunology, pathology, biochemistry, and microbiology are offered, in English, by teachers in the conventional medical school. Students share laboratory and teaching facilities with conventional medicine students. After completion of the programme, students are familiar with Western medicine documents such as laboratory test results and should be able to provide appropriate clinical service to patients without delaying needed conventional treatment.

2.2 Clinical observation in a Western medicine hospital

Students in the BCMed programme participate in clinical observation in conventional medicine hospitals, allowing them to learn how WMPs interview, examine, take history, diagnose, prescribe medications, and treat patients. In a course entitled “Patient Care Project”, students from BCMed, Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBBS), Bachelor of Nursing (BNurs), and Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm) jointly visit patients to identify physical, social, and psychological disorders, and to learn how to establish good inter-professional communication and cooperation.

3 Providing Chinese medicine education to medical students and WMPs

To meet the demands of the conventional medicine

departments and schools, our school offers several Chinese medicine courses that introduce the philosophy and healing concepts of Chinese medicine to medical students and to medical and health care professionals.

3.1 Introduction of Chinese medicine to students enrolled in BNurs, MBBS, and BPharm programmes

We provide Chinese medicine courses for students in the BNurs, MBBS, and BPharm programmes. In addition to introducing basic Chinese medicine principles, diagnostic methods, meridian and *Zang-Fu* organ theories and treatment and prevention of diseases, we have designed specialized lectures for students of other disciplines. For example, we introduce students of the BNurs programme to courses on Chinese medicine dietary therapy and methods of nurturing life, which enhances their patient care skills; to these students we also teach basic Chinese medicine procedures such as moxibustion and acupuncture for such conditions as stroke and chemotherapy-induced side effects. In the MBBS programme, we emphasize evidence-based Chinese medicine and introduce students to the uses and possible side effects of Chinese medicine and drug-herb interactions. In the BPharm programme, we provide a more detailed account of the Chinese Materia Medica and its pharmacology and toxicology, as well as the overview of basic Chinese medical theory. Through such courses, students of conventional medicine can establish objective and positive attitudes to Chinese medicine.

3.2 Internships to deepen medical students’ understanding of Chinese medicine

Our school provides clinical internships for BNurs, MBBS and BPharm students that allow them to observe CMP clinical practice, Chinese medicine modalities (*e.g.*, acupuncture, Tui-na), and a Chinese medicine laboratory. These activities enable students to understand how scientific evidence is sought in Chinese medicine and to comprehend CMP working processes, thus building a bridge between Chinese and conventional practitioners and enhancing conventional students’ appreciation of Chinese medicine.

3.3 Certificate course in Chinese medicine for medical and health care professionals

To foster understanding and cooperation among Chinese and Western medicine practitioners, a continuing education certificate course for current health care professionals has been developed in coordination with the Hospital Authority. In this course, we introduce the principles of evidence-based Chinese medicine, in order to build practitioners’ confidence in Chinese medicine, and teach those in other

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