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Report from the Second International Conference of Traditional and Complementary Medicine on Health 2015



A B S T R A C T

The Second International Conference of Traditional and Complementary Medicine on Health was held from October 24th through 27th at the GIS National Taiwan University Convention Center in Taipei. Twenty-seven invited speakers, representative of fourteen Countries, delivered their lecture in front of an audience of more than two hundreds of attendees. In addition, a poster exhibition with seventy-two presenters completed the scientific sessions. The leitmotif of the Conference was to promote a common platform in which all medical knowledge is integrated to improve the health care system. Traditional medicine and complementary medicine are characterized by a holistic approach to prevent and cure diseases, making use of natural products and/or physical manipulations. In this context, the Conference emphasized the importance of the Quality Control and of standardized methods for the authentication, preparation and characterization of the herbal products and nutrient supplements, as well as the need for controlled clinical trials and for experimental studies to demonstrate the efficacy and to understand the underlying mechanisms of the preventive and curative treatments. In this report, we highlight the novel findings and the perspectives in Traditional and Complementary Medicine (TCM; 傳統暨互補醫學 *chuán tǒng jì hù bǔ yī xué*) that emerged during the conference.

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1. The ICTCMH 2015 at a glance

The second International Conference of Traditional and Complementary Medicine on Health (ICTCMH 2015) took place from October 24th through 27th at the GIS National Taiwan University Convention Center in Taipei (Taiwan). The event was hosted by the Journal of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (JTCM) and sponsored by several medical and research institutions worldwide (see the website "<http://ictcmh2015.org.tw/>" for more information). The conference started on the 24th with a dinner-buffet reception to welcome the delegates. The conference was officially opened the 25th morning by the President of the Congress Prof. Lee-Yan Sheen, who illustrated the scope of the Conference and presented the newly founded International Association of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (www.iatcm.org/). A welcome address was delivered by Dr. Yun-Tson Tsao (President of Taipei Chinese Medical Association), by Prof. Been-Huang Chiang (Minister, Taiwanese Ministry of Health and Welfare), and by Prof. Pan-Chyr Yang (Office of the President, National Taiwan University). The opening ceremony ended with the Tai chi performance of the

famous dancers "Pei-Yi Li" and "Chia-Hong Sun". Then, the two-days scientific conference started. Twenty-seven invited speakers (see Fig. 1), representative of fourteen Countries, presented their work on traditional medicine and complementary medicine. A poster exhibition with seventy-two presenters completed the scientific sessions.

The conference ended the 26th evening with a gala dinner washed down with champagne and red wine. The evening was enlivened by the performances of the violinist of the "Bachnalina Club", who played Taiwanese classical music [Bang Chhun Hong (望春風 *wàng chūn fēng*; *bāng tshun-hong*)/Rainy Night Flower (雨夜花 *yǔ yè huā*; *hōo iā hue*)/All Seasons Red (四季紅 *sì jì hóng*; *sù-kui àng*)], and of the "NTU Belly Dance Club" Belly dancers.

2. The scientific program

The scientific program listing the invited speakers and the title of their lectures is reported in Appendix I (more info can be found on the website "<http://ictcmh2015.org.tw/Speakers.php>"). The lectures focused on the following main topics: a) Traditional medicine; b) Herbal medicine; c) authentication, standardization and quality control; d) Pathophysiological mechanisms of action; e) translational studies.

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Fig. 1. The group photo of the Second International Conference of Traditional and Complementary Medicine on Health 2015.

Following, we summarize the novelties presented in the lectures and the perspectives emerged from the discussion.

3. Traditional medicine: the past, the present and the future

Dr. Edwin L. Cooper (Department of Neurobiology, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, USA) has traced the history of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM; 補充與替代醫學 *bǔ chōng yǔ tì dài yī xué*), highlighting the efforts made in the recent decades to establish the efficacy and validity of a diverse range of traditional therapies through rigorous, evidence-based research. He pointed to the inclusive and holistic approaches of traditional medicine as opposed to the reductionist approach of the orthodox medicine, which reflect on the therapeutic options offered to the patients.^{1,2} In his lecture, Dr. Saikat Sen (Institute of Pharmacy, Assam down town University, India) provided an interesting overview of the history of Indian Ayurvedic and Siddha traditional medicine, and how this knowledge is now officially integrated with the orthodox medicine in the health care system in India. The combination of traditional and modern approaches to cure diseases is expected to improve the efficacy of the public health system, granting access to safe and controlled treatments of chronic diseases to large section of the population.

4. Herbal medicine and dietary supplements as complementary healing remedies

Dr. Fu-Ton Liu (Institute of Biomedical Sciences, Academia Sinica, Taiwan) presented an overview of the biological functions of lectins, carbohydrate-binding proteins that may contribute to the therapeutic effects of herbal medicine. In fact, lectins play a role in several processes including inflammation, immune reaction, and cell-to-cell adhesion. Of note, some galectins (β -galactoside-binding lectins) serve as biomarkers of certain types of tumors. Wolfberry (枸杞 *gǒu qǐ*), the fruit of *Lycium barbarum* and *Lycium chinense*, is used in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM; 中醫 *zhōng yī*) to cure affections of liver, eyes and kidneys. Dr. Kwok-Fai So (Department of Ophthalmology, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong) found that the *Lycium barbarum* polysaccharide (LBM) fraction has multiple beneficial effects on a variety of pathophysiological conditions including aging, liver steatosis, glaucoma, secondary neuronal degeneration and

sexual ability.^{3,4} Dr. Yee Shin Tan (Mushroom Research Centre, University of Malaya, Malaysia) presented a study showing the potential improvement in cognitive abilities of elderly by the regular consumption of the edible mushroom *Hericium erinaceus* (猴頭菌 *hóu tóu jūn*). Dr. Viduranga Waisundara (National Institute of Fundamental Studies, Sri Lanka) presented the evidence of the beneficial effects of ten edible plants traditionally used in Ayurveda medicine for the prevention and the treatment of diabetes. It is now becoming evident the importance of the microbiota for intestinal health. As a matter of facts, humans are made up of approximately ten trillions of cells and of 30.000 genes, yet a man bears approximately hundred trillions bacteria (i.e., ten times more of cells) for a total of three millions of genes. Dr. Wen Luan Hsiao (Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau) showed that administration of saponins derived from herbal tea [*Ginseng* (人參 *rén shēn*), *red Ginseng* (紅參 *hóng shēn*), *Notoginseng* (三七 *sān qī*) and *Gynostemma pentaphyllum* (七葉膽 *qī yè dǎn*)] increased the intestinal colonization with beneficial microbes, so eliciting protective effects on the mucosa and preventing inflammation and cancer in *ApcMin/+ mice*.⁵ Dr. Tewin Tencomnao (Department of Clinical Chemistry, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, Chulalongkorn University of Bangkok, Thailand) presented a study on the anti-inflammatory and anti-aging properties of *Strebulus asper* and *Acanthus ebracteatus*, two herbs native to Asia. The extracts of these herbs were shown able to reduce glutamate neurotoxicity in hippocampal HT22 neuronal cells and to prolong by 30% the lifespan of the worm *Caenorhabditis elegans*.

5. Authentication, standardization and quality control of medicinal natural products

The lecture delivered by Dr. Fereidoon Shahadi (Department of Biochemistry, Memorial University, Canada) focused on the regulatory issues in the use of nutraceuticals and dietary supplements arising from plants and animals. He warned about the possible adulterations, a real risk for the consumer, which can be neglected because of differences in the regulatory laws in the Countries of production and of use. Hence, the need of a common strategy for the authentication of such products. In this context, Dr. Rudolf Bauer (Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Graz, Austria) drew the attention to the importance of the authentication of herbal-derived medicine by recalling the tragedy occurred in

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