

# **An introduction to "*spirit-filled medicine*"**

## **(An exploration in Theology of Medicine)**

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### **Abstract**

In the light of the fact that proper discussion of theology of medicine is quite rare, this short article highlights the fundamental problem with modern (Western) medicine. China has taken a step forward by recognizing their cultural heritage called TCM. Of course it must be acknowledged that modern (Western) medicine has been very advanced, but also many problems such as side effects and also many toxic materials due to synthetic materials. It is also well known that chemotherapy has a chance to work at a miserable rate of less than 20%, so it is reasonable to argue that the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a conceptual, new approach to treatment.

### **Introduction**

About two weeks ago, a respected senior professor, Prof. Dr. Bambang Hidayat, a member of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences, sent an article to a group of academics. \* In essence he asked: how our response should be to China's recent policies that want to facilitate the practice of treatment based on TCM (traditional Chinese Medicine) in a balanced way. See attachment section.

To what extent we can accept or not TCM and other traditional medicines will be discussed in this article.

### **TCM and other approaches**

His concern is certainly understandable, given the current perception of society is that traditional medicine, often referred to as alternative medicine, is usually

associated with shamanic practices or strange methods such as turtles, snakes, bruises etc., many of which have not passed any clinical trials.

But there are two important things that we should take note of Xi Jinping's new policy on TCM:

a. This policy starts from realizing that the cost of Western medicine is very expensive, mainly due to clinical trials of humans, so it is quite reasonable that the Chinese government wants to give more balanced attention to the Chinese medicine tradition.

b. Traditional Chinese medicine has grown for no less than 4000 years.

However, we shall also note that there are some reports that in Asia, liver cancer can be linked to the use of (excessive) herbal medicines. Of course this needs further study. (5)

Regarding some people's concerns about the removal of clinical trials, it seems the Chinese government is quite cautious, see the following quote:

"Lixing Lao, director of Hong Kong University's School of Chinese Medicine, says that although traditional medicines will no longer need to go through clinical trials, the CFDA will still require remedies to undergo preclinical pharmacological testing and drug-toxicity studies in animals or cells to gain approval."(2)

Certainly it can be expected that the new policy will further strengthen the interest of people to develop and produce drugs based on herbs that have been known to be useful for thousands of years, rather than synthetic (artificial) substances that could potentially not be processed and become toxic. ) (4)

In Indonesia, it is also known a variety of medicinal plants, and there are several apps that provide catalog of such live pharmacies. One of which can be called for example is gendola, which reportedly efficacious for diabetes, cancer, stroke, coronary heart, liver etc. Of course clinical trials are required for this gendola. (6)

### **The fundamental problem of modern medicine (Western)**

There are several scientific authors who express vividly how fundamental the problem with modern (Western) medicine. The fundamental problem is commonly expressed with a *mechanistic* worldview as well as a Cartesian dualism philosophy. (1) (11).

Sheldrake has revealed that the mechanistic view is actually derived from Neo-Platonic philosophy, so it is not based on biblical teaching.

A similar argument was developed by Fritjof Capra in his famous book, *The Turning Point*. (8)

Similarly, Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga has written a paper criticizing materialism. (12)

Unfortunately, however, the thinking of scientists from such disciplines often fails in the midst of massive dis-information (and advertising) that modern (Western) medicine has managed to address almost all human health problems. Is that true?

Let's take a look at the colonial post-reading of Gen. 2: 7 and some other texts.

### **The post-colonial reading of Gen. 2: 7**

If we glance at Gen. 2: 7, we see at a glance that man is made up of the dust of the ground (*adamah*) which is breathed by the breath of life by God (*nephesh*). Here we can ask, does this text really support the Cartesian dualism view?

We do not think so, because the Hebrew concept of man and life is integral. The bottom line: it is not the spirit trapped in the body (Platonic), but the body is flowing in the ocean of spirit. (9) This means that we must think of as an open possibility for developing an integral treatment approach (Ken Wilber), or perhaps more properly called "**spirit-filled medicine**." (10).

Let's look at three more texts:

a. Gen. 1: 2, "The earth is without form and void, darkness over the deep, and the Spirit of God hovering over the waters." Patterns such as Adam's creation

can also be encountered in the creation story of the universe. Earth and the oceans already exist (similar to adamah), but still empty and formless. Then the Spirit of God hovered over it, in the original text "*ruach*" can be interpreted as a strong wind (storm). So we can imagine there is wind/hurricane, then in the storm that God said, and there was the creation of the universe. From a scientific point of view, it is well known in aerodynamics that turbulence can cause sound (turbulence-generated sound). And primordial sound waves are indeed observed by astronomers.

b. Ps. 107: 25, "He said, he raised up a storm that lifted up his waves." The relation between the word (sound) and the storm (turbulence) is interactive. Which one can cause other. That is, God can speak and then storms, or the Spirit of God causes a storm. Then came the voice.

c. Ezekiel. 37: 7, "Then I prophesy as I am commanded, and as soon as I prophesy, it sounds, indeed, a crackling sound, and the bones meet with one another." In Ezekiel it appears that the story of the creation of Adam is repeated, that the Spirit of God is blowing (storm), then the sound of the dead bones arises.

The conclusion of the three verses above seems to be that man is made up of adamah which is animated by the breath or Spirit of God. He is not matter, more accurately referred to as spirit in matter. Like a popular song around 80s goes: "*We are spirits in the material world.*" See also Amos Yong, (7). Therefore, it is inappropriate to develop only materialistic or Cartesian dualism treatment. We can develop a more integral new approach. (1)

The integral view of humanity and spirituality, instead of two-tiered Western view of the world, appears to be more in line with majority of people in underdeveloping countries, especially in Asia and Africa. See for instance the work by Paul Hiebert (14).

Among the studies supporting such an integral approach is the view that cells are waves, see the paper from Prof. Luc Montagnier. (13) (15). And also our paper on the wave nature of matter, as well as the possibility of developing a wave-based (cancer) treatment. (16) (17) \*\*

### **Concluding remarks**

This short article highlights the fundamental problem with modern (Western) medicine. China has taken a step forward by recognizing their cultural heritage called TCM. Of course it must be acknowledged that modern (Western) medicine has been very advanced, but also many problems such as side effects and also many toxic materials due to synthetic materials. It is also well known that chemotherapy has a chance to work for less than 20%, so it is reasonable to argue that the 21st century requires a conceptual, new approach to treatment.

We hope this short article may inspire younger generation of physicists and biologists to rethink and renew their approaches to Nature, and perhaps it may also help to generate new theories which will be useful for a better future of mankind.

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VC & FS

note:

\* thanks to Prof. Dr. Bambang Hidayat, a member of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences

\*\* Our paper on non-particle view of DNA was once presented at the 2016 ICTAP conference in Makassar by coauthor.

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### **Appendix: Nature News, 30 november 2017**

China to roll back regulations for traditional medicine despite safety concerns

Article by David Gray from Reuters

Scientists fear plans to abandon clinical trials of centuries-old remedies will put people at risk.

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The Chinese government is promoting traditional Chinese medicines as an alternative to expensive Western drugs.

Support for traditional medicine in China goes right to the top. President Xi Jinping has called this type of medicine a “gem” of the country’s scientific heritage and promised to give alternative therapies and Western drugs equal government support. Now the country is taking dramatic steps to promote these cures even as researchers raise concerns about such treatments.

From early next year, traditional Chinese medicines may no longer be required to pass safety and efficacy trials in humans in China. Draft regulations announced in October by the China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA) mean traditional medicines can skip such costly and time-consuming trials as long as manufacturers prepare ingredients using essentially the same method as in classic Chinese formulations. The State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the CFDA will compose a list of the approved methods.

The Chinese government has been forcefully promoting traditional Chinese medicines (TCMs) as an alternative to expensive Western drugs. Doctors of Chinese medicine have welcomed the new policy, saying that it will make it easier for companies who produce such medicines to get drugs approved and make them available to patients. Lixing Lao, director of Hong Kong University's School of Chinese Medicine, says that although traditional medicines will no longer need to go through clinical trials, the CFDA will still require remedies to undergo preclinical pharmacological testing and drug-toxicity studies in animals or cells to gain approval.

### Safety concerns

But scientists say that safety concerns continue to plague the industry, and that minimizing clinical-trial requirements could put more patients at risk. On 23 September, the CFDA recalled batches of two injectable TCMs after about ten people fell ill with fevers and chills.

Less than a month later, on 18 October, researchers in Singapore and Taiwan published a study in *Science Translational Medicine* linking liver cancer to aristolochic acid, an ingredient widely used in traditional remedies<sup>1</sup>. Lead author Steven Rozen, a cancer-genomics researcher at Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, is convinced that aristolochic acid contributed to the mutations, but says it's harder to determine to what extent it caused the tumours.

Aristolochic acid has also been linked to cancers of the urinary tract and can cause fatal kidney damage<sup>2, 3</sup>. Rozen says it is still in common use, despite warnings from the US Food and Drug Administration that it is associated with kidney disease. "It would be a good time to reassess regulations" of aristolochic acid, he says.

Lao sees people take remedies containing aristolochic acid every day, and says it should not cause problems if taken “moderately and to treat diseases” rather than as a regular supplement. He says more research is needed into how to ensure the safe use of the potentially toxic substance. Overall, Lao is not concerned about safety issues with traditional medicines because, “unlike Western drug development, these herbal formulas have been used for hundreds and thousands of years,” he says.

But Li Qingchen, a paediatric surgeon at the Harbin Children’s Hospital and a well-known critic of TCMs, says the recent recalls of remedies show that current safety measures aren’t adequate. He says doctors need to inform the public about some of the dangers associated with traditional medicines, but that most are unwilling to speak out against them. “Few doctors would dare to publicly criticize TCMs,” he says. Li thinks that the government’s promotion of TCMs will make it harder for scientists to criticize the drugs “because the matter gets escalated to a political level and open discussions become restricted”.

#### Criticism muted

With strong government support for the alternative medicines industry, Chinese censors have been quick to remove posts from the Internet that question its efficacy. On 23 October, an article on a medical news site that called for closer attention to the risks of aristolochic acid was removed from social media site WeChat. The story had been viewed more than 700,000 times in three days.

Debate over TCMs has been silenced before in China. Last year, a Beijing think tank — the Development Research Center of the State Council — proposed banning the practice of extracting Asiatic black bear bile, another common ingredient in TCMs. The think tank’s report questioned the remedy’s efficacy and suggested using synthetic alternatives. It was removed from the think tank's website after the Chinese Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which supports the development of TCM, called it biased and demanded an apology.

As well as reducing regulations for TCMs, the Chinese government has made it easier to become a doctor of traditional medicine and to open hospitals that use the approach. Since July 2017, students studying traditional medicine no longer need to pass the national medical exams based on Western medicine.

Instead, traditional medicine students can attend apprenticeship training and pass a skills test. And practitioners who want to open a clinic no longer need approval from the CFDA. They need only register with the authority.

The government's ultimate goal is to have all Chinese health-care institutions provide a basic level of TCMs by 2020. A roadmap released in February 2016 by the State Council, China's highest administrative body, plans to increase the number of TCM-licensed doctors to 4 per 10,000 people, an increase from less than 3 practitioners per 10,000 people. The government also wants to push TCMs' share of pharmaceutical sales from 26% to 30% by the end of the decade.

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