

Chinese Medicine and the Importance of Studying the Human Body As A Whole*

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Abstract: This work aimed to explore Chinese Medicine and the importance of evaluating the body as a whole. Results: The current medical model in most the world is a biomedical model of Western Medicine in which great efforts are concentrated on treating symptoms and diseases. The theories of Western Medicine ignore the importance of the dimensions of consciousness and usually focus its attention on a material level. Chinese Medicine treats the human body holistically, taking into consideration a unity of body and spirit in relationship to its environment. By challenging the classic theories of medicine of which the ultimate goal is to combat symptoms and diseases, new options for thought may be found. The symptoms have become a way to restore balance to improve health status. Thus, people can learn about symptoms. It is an evolution and personal growth. For Chinese Medicine, the symptom or disease is a sign of imbalance affecting the whole body and indicates that other aspects of the patient's life need to be evaluated as well, not just the apparent "organ or system affected". Under this new paradigm, holistic Chinese Medicine is as scientific as the Western Medicine. It simply has its own methodology.

Keywords: Holism; Chinese medicine

Theory of Medicine

It seems that medicine has lost sight of the human being. It is said that the super-specialization and exclusive analysis of the hypothesis into the biomedical paradigm produces more detailed knowledge, and at the same time makes "everything dispersed"^[1].

Scientific medicine is growing in technology, but probably also in distrust. As a result, more and more voices are raised in confusion and discomfort with scientific medicine because scientific medicine shows greater interest in the numerical data than in people's life quality^[1,6].

There is no lack of motives to criticize, but these critiques are no more than good intentions in most cases and as such are unable to create new options. However, alternative methodologies to the prevailing model have been

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proposed which treat the human body as a whole.

The study and treatment of the body as a whole do not try to define whether a type of medicine is better, or whether western medicine and the biomedical paradigm are superior to Chinese medicine, or the wisdom of curing or the other way around. The idea is to construct intercultural models in which different forms of understanding and doing medicine coexist^[5].

For 200 years, the medical world has concentrated most of its attention on the development of techniques and technologies. But little progress has been made in the development of the theory or philosophy of medicine^[2,3,7,12].

The pure scientific paradigm responds to criteria of functionality and efficiency. Maybe a background and "something integrative" are required. On the other hand, the alternative and complementary medicine has continued in a separate way. The traditional medicine is practiced within a small population.

The challenge is how to integrate the beliefs and experiences in theory and practice of scientific, alternative and traditional medicines.

David Acurio, a physician from Cuenca, Ecuador, realized the importance of recognizing the "object of work" and was able to plan and participate in health education. This object of work is either in reality or in imagination possible to be created in the frame of reference or in a meaningful framework^[5,8-9].

The real world has problems and its relations which can be investigated, analyzed and interpreted its expressions. In the field of health, the problems or functional processes are observable phenomena which have no meaning by themselves. The meaning of a fact, a phenomenon or a situation is revealed by the interpretation given by the observer^[5].

According to an Ecuadorian public health physician, Edmundo Granda, the relevant framework implies a return reflective of the meaningful framework in order to interpret the world of meaning, ethics and prevailing power in the field of actions that have direct or indirect influences on decisions making^[5,8].

A simple example of this subject is that a small glass tube and a mercury column by themselves don't indicate

anything, but together they can register numerical temperature variations. A trained observer in a hospital would interpret it as a change in temperature and in turn would interpret the function of the thermometer as monitoring the body temperature body^[1].

When people stop interpreting the facts that have occurred in the world and the courses of their lives, their existence dissipates in immediacy and routine because it lacks a direction for understanding the sense^[4].

A sense is needed to interpret realities from imaginations and own experiences. However, in order to deal with a problem or phenomenon, it needs a framework that must be outside the area in which it manifests what it wants to interpret. It is similar to the processes that the material world cannot interpret themselves in this world and they have to be interpreted in a metaphysical framework^[5].

The framework for the contemporary medical science within the biomedical paradigm is limited to the functional field which limits the visualizing of other senses. All the concrete and functional fields are only the expression of an idea. The ideas can be visualized in two aspects: format and content. The content manifests itself in the shape which gives senses and significances^[5,8].

The value of a painting doesn't reside in the characters and the colors of the canvas. The distinct elements of the painting are carriers and transmitters of an idea, an image and an impression contained in colorpainted by the artist. The canvas and the color enable the visualization of the idea, and are consequently the physical expression of a metaphysical content^[1].

The biomedical model in this perspective would be reduced to work only with the formats, rather than the 'all' which is the desired integrity of feelings and meanings, and remains available.

The Dimension of Consciousness of Health and Disease

Disease and health are singular concepts that refer to a state of the human being, not only to the state of organs or isolated parts of the body, which is suggested by the usual language constructed in the biomedical model which focuses on the format rather than on the content^[7,10-11].

What happens in a person in general is the expression

of an information or specification of the corresponding image. For example, the body receives information about the blood pressure through sensors in the veins and the heart, or the glands emit quantities of hormones. These functional images can not be explained by the material itself, but they depend on concrete information of which the starting point is the consciousness^[1].

The consciousness is understood as the knowledge that a human being has of himself and of his environment as a "self" of his existence and as the ability to feel emotions, an understanding of the internal and external environment^[10-11].

When the distinct body functions are combined in a certain way, they produce a harmonious model called health^[1,6-7,10-11]. If one of the functions is disturbed, the harmony of the whole group is broken. Then it is called disease^[1,6-7,10-11]. Consequently, the disease will implicate the loss of a harmony and the disorder of an order which is in balance as another in disharmony.

However, the loss of harmony produced in the consciousness is displayed, which is the level where the information is sent to the body. Thus, the body would be the place, vehicle or mirror of the manifestation of all processes and changes that are produced in the consciousness^[1,4]. They are represented in the stage in which models or prototypes are inter-related. The body thus is converted into the stage where the images of the consciousness manifest themselves^[1].

If a person loses the balance in his consciousness, there will be a sign in his body in the form of a symptom. It would be wrong to state that the body is sick when "only the human being can be sick" even though the state of the disease manifests itself in the body as symptoms. If it was compared with the stage of a theatre play, the actors the plot or the stage is not the tragedy during the presentation of a tragedy, but the play as a whole is the tragedy^[1].

The dimension of consciousness is an invitation to stop regarding the disease as an enemy. Radically the goal changes to transmute the disease, rather than fighting the disease^[1].

In the old medicine theories of the biomedical paradigm, the disease is combated with intensity in each one of its therapeutic strategies. The objective is to elimi-

nate the symptoms^[1]. The transmitter of the disease, in a level of healing, is produced from a transmuted disease that never reaches a defeated symptom. The symptom turns into a signal that indicates the road to restore balance, and to improve the health condition. It means that a person completely becomes healthier. It is about an evolution: learning and growth^[1].

In this context, the biomedical paradigm adopts purely functional measures. The intervention not good, or bad, but exclusive at the material level, in which the academic medicine can even be astonishingly good. We can not, nor should we condemn all its methods en masse since it has resolved many complicated cases, such as a surgery at times curing peritonitis, or a good antibiotic at right dose treating a premature baby with an acute respiratory infection, or all the mechanical support for intensive therapy saving many lives.

There has been the same situation in Traditional Medicine and Complementary Medicine when they try to achieve the healing with functional measures. Although they speak of preventing diseases and of leading a healthy life, they do not consider the disease as a mechanism of life.

The conventional theories of medicine believe that a person can change from being unhealthy to healthy, from disease to health if one changes the paradigm of treating the disease and the symptoms like an obstacle or an enemy. It is visualized as an opportunity for learning and growth, for expanding horizons and job opportunities.

Western Medicine which is fascinated by symptoms and equates disease with symptoms cannot separate the content form. Western Medicine concentrates its efforts and technology resources to treat organs and body parts. Western Medicine focuses on the format and not the essence^[1].

A symptom is a sign that a person as being endowed with soul is sick and has lost the balance of forces of the soul. The symptom indicates that something is wrong or something is not balanced. Denoting a defect, the consciousness has noticed that to be healthy is "missing something"^[1].

Is it important that the patient and therapist do not

consider the symptom as a great enemy to be destroyed, but to turn symptoms into allies which can help find what has been missing?

Chinese medicine and the importance of considering the body as a whole

The Chinese medicine codifies the language of the symptoms from its experiences, laws and principles. Chinese medicine directs its attention to the person as a whole and doesn't separate the body from the mind. All relevant information of the symptoms and other general characteristics are carefully collected and analyzed as what the Chinese medicine designates as syndromes^[7,10-11].

The syndromes in the Chinese Medicine describe a break of the balance displayed in the body. In other words, the information is not processed to get a specific disease or a precise "biochemistry-molecular" cause. Rather, it describes a state of the person and the cause and effect. What is important for the West is always secondary to the language of the symptoms for the Chinese Medicine.

The Chinese Medicine is focused on distinguishing the relationship among symptoms which happen simultaneously in the body and the mind. The logic of the Chinese medicine is analysis, trying to order the symptoms in understandable configurations by laws and principles of Chinese Medicine to satisfy the "guidelines of disharmony" that provide the frame of reference for the treatment, and to select and apply the adequate treatment^[10-11].

The Chinese medicine is holistic based on the idea that the part can not be understood without its relation to the whole. Therefore, the objective is not to arrive at an ultimate cause from a symptom, but to utilize the language of the symptoms as elements of a whole of the body and the mind^[10-12].

If a person shows a symptom, the Chinese medicine will seek to understand how to integrate the symptoms in

the general state of the patient, listening to the language of the symptoms. When a person is healthy or in harmony, a balance is manifested between his body and mind. To the Chinese medicine, when a person is ill, the symptom is the sign of an imbalance that affects the body as a whole. The imbalance can be traced to other aspects of the patient's life besides the apparent "affected organs and systems" of his behavior.

Understanding this paradigm based on the language of the symptoms is the constant challenge for the Chinese medicine. The Chinese system is as logical as the Western's scientific thinking. It is simply more analog and has its own methods.

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