

Three Progressive Roads on Medicine Development and their Relation to the Health-Disease Line

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Abstract

Dominantly, there are three progressive roads on medicine development. They are traditional western medicine (TWM), traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and traditional Indian medicine (TIM). Their differences, together with the relation to the health disease line were demonstrated.

Keywords: Traditional western medicine ; traditional Chinese medicine ; traditional Indian medicine

Introduction

What is disease? To define what disease is, health is needed to be defined because they are relative. According to World Health Organization (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity². In Western philosophy, disease causes many possible series of symptoms. Nowadays many doctors define health as the condition of body without symptoms. Disease is defined as an abnormal condition of an organism that impairs function and more broadly to refer to any condition that causes discomfort, dysfunction, distress, social problems, and/or death to person¹. In Chinese philosophy, health is the balance of yin and yang within the human body. Imbalance of yin and yang is the cause of disease. In Indian philosophy, health is the harmonious feeling of body, mind and spirit. The inharmonious feeling is the state of disease. Therefore, health is an idealistic goal rather than a realistic proposition. It can be defined as a status of body which can be achieved by a process of continuous adjustment to the changing demands of our body and of the changing meanings we give to life so as to obtain a harmonious feeling.

As health and disease are relative and a continuous adjustment can achieve health and failure of adjustment can cause disease, health and disease can be roughly classified into five statuses by health-disease line (Figure 1).² To make health realistic and practical, health is defined as statuses between idealistic health and sub-health at health-disease line (Figure 1). Some statuses, such as easily to be fatigue, cannot be detected by doctors. These statuses cannot be classified as realistic health but the conditions are different from getting disease. These uncomfortable conditions are defined as sub-health. Increase in seriousness of disease can be described in health-disease line (Figure 1) as from right to left-hand side.

As health and disease are continuous states on the health-disease line, factors that change the state of health are needed to be determined in order to know the method for prevention of the state of health from shifting to the disease side and towards the health side. As medicine is derived from the Latin *ars medicina* which means the art of healing, medicine can be defined as the method for shifting the state of health to the health side (right-hand side) on the health-disease line (Figure 1). There are many different kinds of medicine developed from different cultures. But mainly, there are three progressive roads. They are traditional western medicine (TWM), traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and traditional Indian medicine (TIM).

Content

The earliest type of medicine in most cultures was the use of nature. i.e., medicine derived from plants, animals, minerals, sun, moon, etc. The efficacy of these tried and tested medicine were based on empiricism, the theory which regards experience as the only source of knowledge. The practice of medicine developed gradually and separately in different countries and mainly there are three progressive roads.

Traditional Western medicine (TWM) is known as scientific medicine or biomedicine. Its principles are based on scientific knowledge, method or practice. Scientific describes the medicine which is objective, demonstrable, measurable, evidence-based or technological-based. TWM values accurate and precise observation and measurement. It is materialistic that basically, reduces all bodily dysfunctions by material causes, mechanical mechanisms and structural characteristics of compounds and body. Modern doctors are sometimes more interested in the disease than in the people who have the diseases. Patients are valued only as body temperature, blood pressure or whatever is the physical data or symptoms. Disease has become more conspicuous as investigation and treatment has become more objective and scientific. TWM rejects all supernatural, superstition and non-evidence-based medicine that are different from other medical systems, particularly those of the East. TWM saves a lot of people from death or greatly improve the lives of sufferers. However, it sometimes has adverse side-effects ⁴.

Evidence-based medicine is a recent movement of TWM to establish an effective algorithm of practice through the use of collaboration of scientific evidence, data and information, and then developing standard protocols for treatment of diseases. This applies general diagnoses and passive treatments ⁵. However, this movement lead to the development of western allopathic medicine. In addition, symptom-based treatment is developing in the modern world. Study of cells and bacteria under the microscope, genetic engineering, instrumental analysis for disease and medicine, investigation of biological pathways and pharmaceutical reactions are the practices of TWM nowadays.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)

Shen Nong (神農), the “divine farmer,” who personally tasted hundreds of herbs to identify their healing properties. Shen Nong Ban Cao Jing (The Divine Farmer’s Classic Herbal) (神農本草經) is the first of collections detailing Chinese medicinal herbs which is still useful today. Huang Di’s Nei Jing Su Wen (Canon of Internal Medicine)(黃帝內經), containing discussions on illness and diagnosis is the core textbook for Chinese physicians for generations. During the Han dynasty, Zhang Zhong Jing (張仲景)wrote a Treatise on Cold Damage (傷寒論), who combined the theory of medicine and clinical experience on medicine to create the system of diagnosis and treatment method. He grouped the experienced medicinal formulae into Treatise on Cold Damage. In Ming dynasty, Li Shi Zhen (李時珍)wrote Ben Cao Gang Mu (Compendium of Materia Medica)(本草綱目). It contains the natures, tastes, sources and medicinal values of 1892 vegetables, animals and minerals which are in regular use. Nowadays, due to western influence, TCM was analyzed by western evidence-based method and recorded in China Pharmacopoeia.

TCM practices include theories, diagnosis and treatments such as herbal medicine, acupuncture and massage. TCM theory asserts that processes of the human body are interrelated and interacted with the environment continuously. Signs of disharmony help the TCM practitioner to understand, treat and prevent illness and disease.

TCM theory is based on a number of philosophical frameworks including the theory of Yin-yang, five elements, human body Meridian system and Zang Fu organ theory. Diagnosis and treatment are conducted with reference to these concepts. TCM operates different approach from TWM but nowadays some practitioners try to make TCM a biomedical and evidence-based medicine, and even combine with TWM for treatment.

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Traditional Indian medicine (TIM) is a centuries-old traditional medical system that employs a complex approach to diagnosis, incorporating techniques such as pulse analysis and urinalysis, and utilizes behavior and dietary modification, medicines composed of natural materials (e.g., herb and minerals) and physical therapies (e.g. Tibetan acupuncture, moxabustion, etc.) to treat diseases.

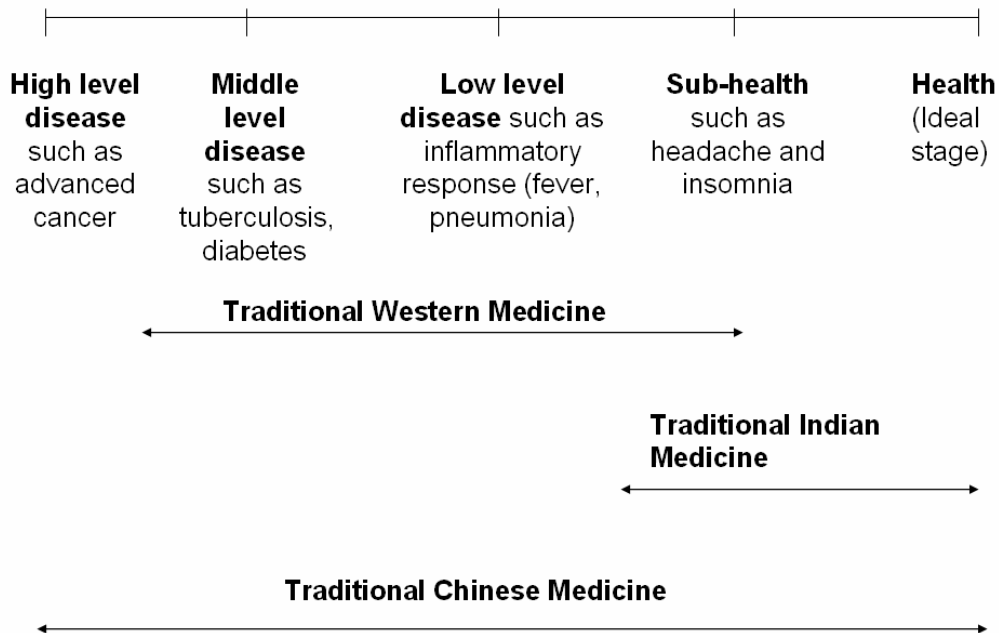
Tibetan medicinal system embraces the traditional Buddhist belief that ultimate causes of all illnesses are the “three poisons” of the mind: “materialism”, “aggression”, and “ignorance”.

In contrast to TWM, TIM theory states that it is necessary to maintain balance in the body’s harmony in order to have good health. With the influence of the West, a theory of harmony within body, mind and spirit of human together with the environment was developed.

Comparison of TWM, TCM and TIM

Different stages of disease are better to be treated with different types of medicine in order to cure disease effectively with the aim of lowering pain of patient and shortering time of treatment. Min usages for the types of TWM, TCM and TIM for different stages of disease were shown in figure 1. The comparison on of TWM, TCM and TIM were tabulated (Table 1).

Figure 1 Major usages of TWM, TCM and TIM across the health-disease line.



Three Progressive Roafs on Medicine Development and their Relation to Health-Disease Line**Table 1 Comparison of TWM, TCM and TIM.**

	TIM	TCM	TWM
Health	Harmonious feeling	Balance between yin and yang	Without physical symptoms
Diagnosis and treatment	Feel the inharmonious and treat naturally	Diagnosis of the imbalances and balance the imbalances	Diagnosis of symptoms and treatment according to scientific method
Approach	Active	Active and passive	Passive
Main Cause of disease	Body (imbalance of three humors) Environment (Three dosa and five elements) Mind and spirit (to have inordinate desire, to be annoyed with and be silly to unlimited wants)	Imbalance (six evils and seven emotions)	Physical (Bacteria, Virus, Fungi)
Treatment Mechanism	Homeopathic such as Ayurveda, herbalism, yoga, meditation, spa)	Homeostatic (Homeopathic and allopathic) such as herbalism, acupuncture, qi gong, etc.)	Allopathic (Antibiotics for Bacteria. Killing and cutting cancer cells)
Prevention of diseases	Keep harmonious by practices (Meditation, giving and less aggression to unlimited wants)	-Keep balancing between yin and yang -Fewer wants	-Eat a healthy diet -Exercise -Do not use addicting substances -Engage only in safe sex -Have regular medical checkups -Prevent injury -Manage stress -Get immunized -Maintain ideal body weight
Level of naturalism	★★★★★★	★★★☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆☆
Philosophical base	Buddhism	Taoism	Scientific evidence
Drugs used based on	Intellectual sense	Experience on human body	Scientific research
Central doctrines	Three humors (rLüng, mKhris-pa, Bad-kan) Three dosa (Vāta, pitta, kapha) Five elements (earth, water, fire, wind, space)	Tai-chi (yin and yang) Five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, water)	Symptoms and scientific evidence

Conclusion

Dominantly, there are three progressive roads on medicine development. They are traditional western medicine (TWM), traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and traditional Indian medicine (TIM). Their differences, together with the relation to the health disease line were demonstrated.

Reference

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