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Editorial

Essential role of medicine and food homology in health and wellness

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is an ancient healing system that has been practiced for thousands of years in China and other East Asian countries. According to the TCM theory, medicine and food share the same origin and may have the same functions in the prevention and treatment of various health conditions. This is how the concept of medicine and food homology is developed and popularized.

In China, an official list of medicine and food homology substances is promulgated by the China National Health Commission (formerly Ministry of Health) (NHC, 2002; NHC, 2020a; NHC, 2020b). All these substances are included in the Chinese Pharmacopoeia and safe to be used as food.

1. Significance and applications of medicine and food homology

In TCM, the concept of medicine and food homology plays a crucial role in understanding the relationship between the body, food, and nature. It is believed that certain foods can have a profound impact on a person's health and well-being, as they possess properties that can either support or counteract the body's internal balance. For instance, some foods are believed to have warming or cooling properties, while others are thought to be moistening or drying.

The significance of medicine and food homology in TCM also extends to the prevention and treatment of specific health conditions. In TCM, it is believed that many common ailments can be attributed to an imbalance in the body's internal environment, which can be corrected by consuming the right combination of foods and herbs. For example, a person suffering from a cold, which is considered a "wind-cold" condition in TCM, may be advised to consume foods with warming properties, such as ginger and cinnamon, to help restore balance and alleviate the symptoms.

One of the main applications of medicine and food homology in TCM is in the area of dietary therapy, which involves the use of foods and herbs to prevent and treat illness. This approach is based on the idea that certain foods have specific therapeutic effects on the body, and that by consuming these foods, a person can help maintain their overall health and well-being. For instance, a person with a weak digestive system may be advised to consume foods with strengthening properties, such as cooked grains and root vegetables such as Chinese yam, *Dioscoreae Rhizoma* (Shanyao in Chinese), to help improve their digestion and overall health.

Another application of medicine and food homology in TCM is in the formulation of herbal remedies. TCM practitioners often use a combination of herbs and foods to create customized treat-

ments for their patients, based on their unique health needs and the specific properties of the ingredients. This approach not only allows for a more personalized approach to healthcare, but it also helps to minimize the risk of side effects and interactions between different herbs and medications.

2. Examples of medicine and food homology substances

There are many examples of medicine and food homology substances, ranging from everyday foods to more exotic herbs and ingredients. Some common examples include: (1) Ginger: This warming herb is widely used to treat digestive issues, colds, and flu. It is believed to have anti-inflammatory, anti-nausea, and immune-boosting properties, making it an ideal remedy for a variety of health conditions. (2) Goji berries (*Lycii Fructus*, Gouqizi in Chinese): These small red berries are a popular medicine and food homology substance, as they are believed to have numerous health benefits, including improving eyesight, boosting the immune system, and promoting longevity. They are considered a "superfood" due to their high antioxidant content and are often used in herbal tonics and teas. (3) Ginseng (*Ginseng Radix et Rhizoma*, Renshen in Chinese): This well-known adaptogenic herb is used to strengthen the body's energy, or *Qi*, and improve overall vitality. It is believed to have a wide range of health benefits, including enhancing mental clarity, reducing stress, and supporting immune function. (4) Jujube (*Ziziphi Jujubae Fructus*): Also known as red dates, jujube is a popular ingredient in TCM and also a common food, as they are believed to have nourishing and calming properties. They are often used in treating insomnia, anxiety, and digestive issues. (5) Lotus seeds (*Nelumbinis Semen*, Lianzi in Chinese): These seeds are often used to treat a variety of health conditions, including insomnia, digestive problems, and heart palpitations. They are believed to have a calming effect on the body and are often used in herbal teas and soups for their soothing properties.

3. Modern research and evidence are needed for integrating medicine and food homology into modern healthcare practices

While the concept of medicine and food homology has been an integral part of TCM for centuries, it has only recently begun to gain attention in the scientific community and food industry. Modern research is increasingly supporting the idea that medicine and food homology substances can play a significant role in promoting health and preventing illness. For instance, studies have shown that many of the foods and herbs used in TCM, such as ginger (Di et al., 2010; Mashhadi et al., 2012), goji berries (Ma et al., 2019),

and ginseng (Riaz et al., 2019) have potent antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immune-boosting properties, which can help protect the body against a variety of health issues.

While more research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms behind medicine and food homology, these findings provide a strong foundation for the continued integration of TCM principles into modern healthcare practices.

As the concept of medicine and food homology continues to gain attention in the health and wellness industry, there is a growing need for healthcare professionals to integrate these principles into their practice. This can involve a variety of strategies, such as incorporating TCM-inspired dietary recommendations into patient care plans, collaborating with TCM practitioners to develop holistic treatment plans, and promoting the use of medicine and food homology substances in functional foods and dietary supplements. By embracing the principles of medicine and food homology, healthcare professionals can offer their patients a more comprehensive and personalized approach to health and wellness, while also supporting the sustainability and resilience of the global food system.

4. Challenges and future prospects of medicine and food homology in health and wellness industry

While the concept of medicine and food homology holds significant promise for the future of health and wellness, there are also a number of challenges that must be addressed in order to fully realize its potential. One of the main challenges is the need for more rigorous scientific research to validate the efficacy and safety of medicine and food homology substances. This will not only help to build credibility and trust among healthcare professionals and patients, but it will also enable the development of standardized guidelines and best practices for the use of medicine and food homology in modern healthcare.

Another challenge is the need for greater collaboration and communication between TCM practitioners and conventional healthcare providers. By fostering a more integrated and interdisciplinary approach to healthcare, professionals from both fields can work together to develop innovative and effective prevention and treatment strategies that incorporate the principles of medicine and food homology, while also addressing the unique needs and preferences of individual patients.

Despite these challenges, the future prospects of medicine and food homology in the health and wellness industry are bright. The growing interest in natural and holistic approaches to health and wellness, coupled with the increasing recognition of the importance of a balanced diet and sustainable food systems, suggests that the principles of medicine and food homology will continue to gain momentum in the years to come.

5. Global influence of medicine and food homology

While the concept of medicine and food homology originated in China, its influence has spread far beyond its borders. Today, TCM is practiced in many countries around the world, and the principles of medicine and food homology are increasingly being recognized as a valuable tool for promoting health and wellness. In addition, the growing interest in traditional and natural approaches to

health and wellness has led to the development of many TCM-inspired dietary and herbal products, which are widely available in health food stores and online. This trend is expected to continue, as more people seek out natural and holistic remedies for their health concerns.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of medicine and food homology is a fundamental aspect of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which emphasizes the role of food and herbs in promoting health and preventing illness. While the scientific evidence supporting these principles is still emerging, the growing interest in natural and holistic approaches to health and wellness suggests that the principles of medicine and food homology will continue to gain attention in the years to come. Healthcare professionals and food scientists are responsible for embracing the essential role of medicine and food homology in shaping the future of health and wellness. By integrating these principles into practice and product development, a more comprehensive and personalized approach to healthcare will serve better to people all over the world, while also supporting the sustainability and resilience of the global food system. So, let us embrace the concept of medicine and food homology and work towards a healthier and more sustainable future for all.

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Junshi Chen
China National Centre for Food Safety Risk Assessment, Beijing 100021,
China
E-mail address: chenjunshi@cfsa.net.cn

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