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Discussion

Traditional Chinese medicine and nursing care

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Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is an important part of Chinese traditional culture. The outstanding spiritual and material achievements made during the development of TCM are the embodiment of Chinese people's view on life, disease and health [1,2]. With a long history; TCM boasts a complete system of medical theories, rich clinical experience and unique therapeutic techniques.

1. Holism of TCM and holistic nursing care

With the transformation of modern medical model and people's view on health, great changes have taken place in the way of nursing. Holistic nursing care, the future of modern nursing, is a guiding principle or concept of nursing. It is people-oriented, guided by contemporary nursing theory, based on nursing procedures, and features systematic implementation of the procedures in clinical practice and management of nursing. The goal of holistic nursing is to provide the best care for people based on their physical, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and many other needs. It is consistent with the holistic concept of "unity of the heaven and humanity" and "unity of the body and mind" and the "people-oriented" approach in TCM. According to TCM, the human body is an organic whole based on the *zang-fu* organs and held together via meridians and collaterals, all of which are interconnected in terms of structure and influence each other in terms of function and pathology. In addition, since human body depends on its natural and social environment, its physiological states

change with time and space and its pathological states are closely related to the changes in the climatic, geographic and social environment. From the above we can see the similarity in terms of the holistic concept between TCM and nursing.

2. Theory (*Dao*,道), knowledge (*Shu*,术) and skills (*Ji*,技) of TCM

Theory (*Dao*,道) here refers to the unique theoretical system of TCM established by physicians in ancient times during the formation and development of TCM by integrating Chinese philosophical ideas with their abundant medical knowledge and rich clinical experience. Knowledge (*Shu*,术) means the principles, strategies, formulas and medicinal substances of TCM, wisdom obtained by Chinese people in the ancient time from their fight against disease and characterized by the holistic concept and syndrome differentiation and treatment. TCM nursing care as an important part of TCM also makes use of knowledge in TCM. In the context of nursing, methods includes reinforcing the healthy qi to eliminate pathogenic factors, nursing aiming at seeking the root cause of disease, balancing yin and yang, and consideration of the climatic and seasonal conditions, of geographic environment, and of individual's constitution in the treatment of diseases. Lastly, some unique and easy skills (*Ji*,技) in TCM include cupping, tui na, scraping, auricular acupuncture and fumigation and bath with herbs.

3. Strengthening the inheritance and innovation of TCM theory, knowledge and skill in education and research of nursing

Nowadays, TCM plays an increasingly significant role in management of chronic diseases, prevention of diseases, health preservation and rehabilitation, and also in health care of women, children and the elderly. To obtain all-round development, nursing students should acquire knowledge of humanities related to TCM culture, be familiar with the history and development of TCM and TCM nursing, and understand the way of perception and thinking of TCM and the basic features of TCM nursing in addition to learning the basic theory, knowledge and skills of TCM. On the other hand, as an empirical science, TCM nursing has to explore novel ways of development under the impact of translational medicine and evidenced-based medicine.

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Research methods should be inherited and innovated for the study of literature and theory of TCM nursing, for clinical research into nursing based on syndrome differentiation, for improvement of clinical skills, and for practical application of research results to better safeguard health of the mankind. Furthermore, China's Ministry of Education introduced in 2010 the *Standards for Establishment of Undergraduate Nursing Programs* and *Basic Requirements for Teaching in Undergraduate Nursing Programs*, which have promoted establishment and development of nursing programs in medical colleges and universities in China and has provided a basic guideline for cultivation of nursing professionals. In 2013, the Nursing Education Steering Committee under the Ministry of Education formulated relevant standards for TCM nursing programs in collaboration with TCM colleges and universities, standardizing the curriculum and clinical practice of nursing programs in such colleges and

universities, to promote standardized cultivation of nursing professionals [3,4].

In summary, TCM and modern nursing care have a lot in common. The unique characteristics of TCM are significant advantages enjoyed by TCM nursing. Moreover, innovated research methods should be adopted in and more attention should be paid to the research into TCM nursing.

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