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### **Hangzhou ZUSM TCM Program Reflection**

I first came across Brown's Traditional Chinese Medicine program at Zhejiang University School of Medicine as a rising high school senior researching colleges. I remember thinking that this program was the perfect intersection between my desire to embrace my cultural background and my passion for medicine. During my first year at Brown, many experiences further piqued my interest in how alternative practices complement more conventional western medicine. The FYS, Pain and the Human Condition introduced me to the principles of acupuncture and convinced me of its legitimacy. Shadowing a rehabilitation doctor and acupuncturist at a private practice in Long Beach, CA opened my eyes to how closely alternative and western medicines interact in patient care. Thus, I was eager to attend the TCM program in Hangzhou and found it to be such a worthwhile experience that has definitely enriched my understanding of truly holistic medicine.

The opening two weeks were spent learning TCM principles and acupuncture and cupping techniques. Every morning began with a hot cup of the famous Hangzhou Longjing tea in Dr. Zhang's office, as he would start up the lecture on any number of topics ranging from the five elements to traditional Chinese medicine. Through these talks, I was able to fully grasp just how complex TCM is, as it has been built upon thousands of years of history, evolving purely from trial and error. Then came our introduction to acupuncture and cupping – the application of everything we had learned in the first week in a clinical setting. Dr. Fei and Dr. Gao taught us the countless *xué wèi* (acupoints) that line the meridians of the body and what the stimulation of each could accomplish in the body. After practicing inserting needles into several layers of our own white coats, we were able to try acupuncture on ourselves. Dr. Fei then showed us different types of needle movements that could elicit different “needle sensations,” by performing acupuncture on us. After feeling numbness, soreness, and then ultimately relaxation in my hand, a practice that I was once so skeptical of suddenly became very real to me. We were also able to get hands-on experience in cupping, learning how to carefully heat the interior of the cup to expel the oxygen with the flame while not burning the sides of the cup. It was a truly unique experience to learn these techniques that my relatives in Shanghai so commonly use, (although I declined when they asked me to practice on them) and to see first hand how Chinese culture is integrated in conventional medical practice.

The next two weeks were spent at Binjiang hospital, an impressive new institution with state-of-the-art facilities. Here was where I got a glimpse of life as a doctor, showing up early for rounds and gaining actual bedside experience. My time in the rehabilitation and rheumatology wards was probably my favorite part of this program. Dr. Xiong went above and beyond to teach us, showing us how to spot hematomas on CT scans and letting us assist in modified barium swallow tests to determine if patients could do without their nasogastric tubes. Dr. Shen perfectly coordinated our schedule and oriented us with very interesting (and very expensive) physical therapy machines, which made for an interesting comparison to U.S. PT facilities. The chief of the department had us perform a mini-mental state examination to gauge the cognitive deficits of a MVC patient, which was a true test of my Mandarin. Dr. Yu allowed us to fully participate in her inpatient acupuncture service, giving us the responsibility of removing needles from her patients and even allowing us to insert needles for certain patients. Dr. Xue, in her impressively fluent English taught us the nuances of rheumatic diseases and how customized treatments were

used to treat specific symptoms. We were even able to sit in on a few lectures and demonstrations on topics ranging from massage techniques, rheumatic patient self-care, and the Orfit orthotics splinting material demo, during which we made our own custom splints. In this clinical setting, I learned and experienced so much more than would be possible in the United States at this point in my education, which makes me value this opportunity that much more. Every doctor and resident there became someone I admired and those two weeks really solidified my passion for medicine.

Throughout the program, we also heard informative lectures about the Chinese healthcare system and continuous quality control measures, which was especially interesting after having taken the course, Healthcare in the U.S., last semester. I was able to make meaningful comparisons between the two systems, and saw how cultural factors affected China's adoption of some American methods of quality improvement. For example, doctors do not use gloves while practicing acupuncture because the latex interferes with their dexterity and ability to bring about the necessary needle sensations. Thus, according to the doctors I spoke with, this became an issue every time foreign accreditation agencies came to audit ZUSM, as these bodies may not fully understand the practice. Further, while doing rounds, people who were waiting often stood inside of the rooms or watched other patients' procedures without regard for privacy, which shocked me. It was so drastically different from the strictly confidential medical environment set by HIPPA in the U.S.; yet, none of the patients seemed to be bothered by the intrusion and some even took it as an opportunity to relate and empathize with fellow patients. My time at ZUSM really brought a whole new understanding of how culture can so significantly influence the provision of care and broke down my previously ingrained perception of what healthcare *should* be like, based on U.S. standards.

Aside from the medicine, the exchange was also an invaluable cultural experience, as I was wholly immersed in Southeastern Chinese customs. From tasting savory authentic dishes to tackling the language barrier, I felt fully in touch with my Chinese heritage and was able to more thoroughly comprehend the culture and values of my family. My Mandarin improved, as the program really facilitated the development of my fluency by forcing me to speak the language in a professional setting. Through texting our parents who had medical background in China to ask for pin yin translations during rounds, we were also slowly able to learn several new phrases of medical Chinese. Not to mention, I perfected how to say the phrases "Can we have an English menu?" and "Sorry, we're students, not doctors" in Mandarin. At the conclusion of the program, I was not only able to better communicate with my extended family, I was also able to more closely relate to them.

My trip to Hangzhou was a formative experience, and has truly aided my development of more cross-cultural understandings that I can hopefully apply to my practice as a physician in the future. I definitely recommend this program to anyone who seeks to gain a global perspective on healthcare and an understanding of alternative treatments – a quickly emerging domain of medicine that now has an increased role patient care in the U.S. as well.

Thank you for the opportunity!

TCM program at Zhejiang University

This summer of 2015, I attended the 4-week Traditional Chinese Medicine program hosted by Brown University in Hangzhou. Along with 5 other students, I had the privilege to learn from doctors and staff affiliated with the Second Affiliated Hospital of Zhejiang University. We got hands on experience in topics such as acupuncture, cupping, herbs, and massage. In addition to learning traditional therapies, we had the opportunity to shadow physicians in the Rheumatology inpatient clinic and the Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy departments. Going into the program, I did not expect to get so much hands on experience, and thought it would be more of a classroom setting. I was pleasantly surprised when I discovered that we would get truly immersed into the culture of the hospital, and get direct contact and communication with patients. The doctors we worked with were attentive and very informative, and helped get us situated with the Chinese healthcare system, which is vastly different from that of the US. The coordinators of the program that worked in the international department of the hospital spoke perfect English and always listened to our feedback about the program in order to improve it for the future.

The schedule for the program was both rigorous and relaxed. The schedule was filled each day from 8AM until 5PM, but Chinese people tend to prioritize rest and afternoon naps more than in the West, so we often got afternoon breaks. Sometimes, our teachers would even let us out early before lunch. We were offered tea by many teachers and got to try the famous Hangzhou green tea. On the days we went to the Binjiang campus of the hospital, we had to wake up at 6AM in order to catch the bus, but it was definitely worth it because Binjiang is a very high tech, modern, and westernized hospital that didn't have the rushed and crowded atmosphere of the main campus.

Our living situation was quite unique. We lived in an apartment right next to the hospital, which made transportation very simple—we only had to walk a few minutes to get there. When we had to go to the Binjiang campus of the hospital on the other side of town, the bus stop was also only a block away. Our apartment was situated very close to the hub of the city and the famous West Lake. The streets were filled with silk and tea shops, and also some amazing restaurants. We were offered the option to eat at the hospital canteens, but since there were so many incredible restaurants within walking distance, we didn't eat at the canteens very often. We often frequented a porridge place that was inexpensive, and we even registered for cards there so we could score deals. The apartment was fairly close to a shopping market called Lianhua, where we bought water bottles and various snacks. Our apartment consisted of three bedrooms with two beds each, a fridge/microwave, and a bathroom with a washer/dryer. The amenities were all provided for us and I didn't think anything was missing in terms of basic living essentials.

Our teachers and mentors urged us to check out everything Hangzhou and the surrounding areas has to offer, and always suggested places for us to go on the weekends. They really pushed us to explore the outdoors and go sightseeing in order to immerse ourselves into the culture of the area. Train tickets in China are quite cheap, so it is very easy to spend a weekend in Shanghai, Nanjing, or any other city nearby. Taxis are also cheap, so getting to museums, parks, and shopping districts in Hangzhou is very quick and simple.

Overall, the experience of the TCM program in Hangzhou was incredible. I was able to spend four weeks with people who quickly became close friends, and we bonded over awesome medical knowledge and delicious food. I would recommend this program to anybody interested in getting a well rounded international experience in the medical field. I'll definitely always remember this program and all the people I met along the way.

Traditional Chinese Medicine at Zhejiang University School of Medicine

After the first two weeks of studying TCM theories of acupuncture, massage therapy, herbal medicines, and cupping, we commuted to Binjiang Hospital for the last two weeks to observe these theories in action. We shadowed doctors in the Rehabilitation/Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy and Rheumatology departments, and we observed traditional Chinese medicine's intersection with Western practices. Additionally, we attended lectures presented by Ms. Yang Mingli concerning the Chinese health care system. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and accomplished the goals of personal growth and professional insight I set out to achieve.

Initially, understanding TCM concepts was difficult for me. I felt some skepticism about the efficacy of TCM. Dr. Fei, one of our primary acupuncture teachers, explained that we as American students should not approach TCM with Western standards. For instance, we were stunned that doctors do not sterilize the cups used for cupping in between each patient's use. However, he assured us that the probability of contamination was very small, and that autoclaving the cups would simply be inefficient and unpractical. Furthermore, he helped us comprehend TCM using a wider, cultural lens. TCM emphasizes prevention and finding the root of the problem instead of focusing on just the symptoms. Western medicine on the other hand appears much more specialized in comparison – its doctors don't usually focus on the whole body. I was able to draw connections between Human Cognition from the class I took last semester to the basic concepts of TCM. Essentially, Easterners employ holistic views, whereas Westerners utilize analytic thinking. When researchers placed images in front of people from the East and people from the West, Easterners tended to notice more of the background, whereas Westerners remembered more about the focal points of the pictures. Likewise, while Western medicine concentrates heavily on specific diagnoses, TCM strives to assess patients' entire bodies and relates attributes of organs like the tongue to overall health. These observations and practices have been established and accepted over thousands of years and opened my mind to new possibilities of treatment.

After witnessing the extensive use of acupuncture, massage therapy, and cupping in the Rehab and Rheumatology departments, especially for patients with chronic pain and chronic diseases, and hearing first-hand accounts about the effectiveness of such treatments, I was convinced that TCM tools would be useful in my future as a physician. This program also presented many opportunities to have meaningful interactions with caretakers, patients, and even innovators from the medical industry. Jessica and I were lucky enough to partake in a workshop hosted by Binjiang and led by a French orthoses maker and a Belgian representative from the company Orfit. They gave us material to practice with, and we went home with our own customized wrist orthoses. Dr. Yu allowed us to try "flying needle" acupuncture on a patient, with the patient's consent of course. We toured an herb museum with Dr. Zhang and Dr. Fei; we conducted a mini-mental state exam in Chinese on an Alzheimer's patient by ourselves; we witnessed the joys and pains of people in PT/OT who were starting to stand up or walk by themselves for the first time in years. Through it all, we bonded as a group while living together in one apartment. I would highly recommend this program to anyone curious about TCM and Chinese culture.

## Zhejiang Reflection

For four weeks this summer, I had the opportunity to study Traditional Chinese Medicine at the Second Affiliated Hospital Zhejiang University School of Medicine. Growing up in a Chinese family and having visited China in the past, I had always had some exposure to the herbs and concepts of TCM in the medicines I took when I was little and the dishes that my grandmother cooks to 'reduce heat' in the summer. However, I never quite knew whether or not to believe in these theories that can be traced back centuries and centuries, so I was excited to be able to study and see the practices in action during my time in Hangzhou.

This program provided a glimpse of how TCM has been integrated into a largely Westernized hospital complex and was also a fascinating look into the Chinese healthcare system in general. Our schedule was divided into one week of background lectures on TCM theory, one week in the outpatient TCM clinic at the main hospital campus, one week in the rheumatology department at the new Binjiang campus, and a final week in the rehabilitation medicine department also at the Binjiang campus. Additionally, we attended lectures given by the hospital's head of international exchange programs, learning about quality improvement processes within the hospital as well as the structure of the healthcare system in China. From our daily observations, we saw that being a patient in China is very different from being a patient in the US. With a much larger population and a weaker primary care health system, hospitals in China are always packed with people who are able to come in on the day of to see a doctor rather than having to make appointments ahead of time. This made for a slightly chaotic registration area, but we learned that this way, patients are almost guaranteed an appointment on the day they come in rather than having to wait weeks for a doctor to become available.

We began the month with lectures about yin/yang, qi, the meridians, the cultural influences of China on TCM, and many more of the overarching concepts that shape the practice of TCM. During one afternoon at the TCM pharmacy, we learned about the hundreds of different types of herbs and compounds that are used to remedy various illnesses and got to taste the five different flavor categories that these medicines fall into. This included treatments as foreign as snake skin and as familiar as cinnamon. In the outpatient clinic, we shadowed TCM doctors as they treated patients with acupuncture, cupping, massage, and moxibustion. We were even given the chance to experience acupuncture and cupping ourselves in order to better understand the sensations they produce to alleviate different pains and aches because they cannot be fully described with words alone. The acupuncture widely used in the clinics incorporated electrical stimulation at the top of the needles, a new addition that has stemmed from Western influences. Cupping, which is the process of using a flaming cotton ball to quickly drive air out of a bamboo or glass cup so that it is able to suction onto skin, was used to remove negative energy from the body. Its distinctive pinkish-reddish round marks left on the skin remain visible for days afterwards, but because it is able to relieve stress and back pain, it was used on almost all of the patients we saw.

The highlight of the trip for me was the week we spent in the rehabilitation medicine unit. Through our time in the inpatient wards, outpatient offices, weight loss clinic, TCM facility, and hyperbaric oxygen chamber room, it was clear that this branch of medicine had managed to seamlessly incorporate TCM practices into modern medicine. Stroke patients were not only rehabilitated using PT/OT/ST, but they also received acupuncture, sometimes twice a day, as a way to maximize their treatment during their time in the wards. We also saw how traditional acupuncture has evolved into a new practice of weight loss acupuncture, where small surgical threads are carefully needled under the skin on people's stomachs and backs where acupoints

thought to suppress appetite are located. All of the doctors and nurses in the rehab unit were so welcoming to us and were willing to take the time to explain concepts that helped us better understand their work.

I enjoyed learning about yin/yang and all the basic principles of TCM that are at the root of the practices still used today. I found that it was very helpful to be able to speak at least conversational Chinese in order to understand patients and some doctors who did not speak English as fluently. Outside of the hospital, we were able to explore Hangzhou, visiting Xi Hu (West Lake), Shanghai, and even the Xi Xi Wetlands during the Dragon Boat Festival to see dragon boat racing. I would definitely recommend this program to students interested in a holistic view of medicine as well as to anyone who just wants to learn about how medicine is practiced in another country.