

# Narrative Medicine in Traditional Chinese Medicine: A New Frontier for Holistic Patient Care

Marta Hanson<sup>1,\*</sup>

The ten essays in the previous special issue of *Chinese Medicine and Culture* (CMC) on narrative medicine, “Narrative Medicine in China and Chinese Sources for Narrative Medicine” published June 2023, were organized according to five themes. Several essays first introduced readers of this journal to: 1) The history of narrative medicine since 2001 as a distinct discipline in the US; 2) The history of narrative medicine in China since 2011. In addition to these two topics, the remaining articles developed upon three interconnected themes: 3) The connections between central concepts in modern narrative medicine and comparable concepts within traditional Chinese medicine (TCM); 4) The narrative-medicine potential of primary Chinese sources from antiquity to the present; 5) How case studies (distinct from case reports) could be used to teach narrative competency in East Asian medicine in the US context.

Ten contributions to this second special issue of *Chinese Medicine and Culture* on narrative medicine, “The Constructing Journey of Narrative Chinese Medicine: A Blend of Ancient Chinese Wisdom to Modern Medical Practice”, largely expand upon the third through fifth topics first addressed in the 2023 issue and added a sixth focus on specific clinical problems seen in TCM practice today. The guest editor of this issue, Yang Xiaolin (杨晓霖), adds an additional connective thread binding these two issues together.

Both of Yang’s articles contribute to the third theme on connections between modern narrative medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. Yang’s first

article published in the first issue, “The Inheritance and Development of Chinese Narrative Medicine Practice to the Philosophical Wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine” sought to build the discipline of “narrative traditional Chinese medicine” by fleshing out the potential of Chinese medical theories, such as the four diagnoses, narrative mediation, and mind-body holistic philosophy of TCM to develop the narrative competency of present-day healthcare providers. Her second article with Huang Qing in this issue expands upon the first article by further fleshing out the “narrative thinking of healthcare providers” in a wider range of concepts within TCM theory.

Three contributions followed upon the same third theme. Two articles focused on how “narrative TCM” can guide healthcare providers in treating their patients with psychological problems such as “narrative foreclosure” and types of paroxysmal disorders called *Ben Tun Qi* (奔豚气) in ancient Chinese medical texts. One article discussed how to use “narrative TCM” to improve collaborative relationships among doctors, nurses, and their patients to optimize diagnostic accuracy and treatment options.

The original fourth theme’s focus on using Chinese primary sources to develop narrative competency was expanded upon in this issue through an article that focused on *Zhu You Shu* (祝由术), ritual healing techniques using talismans and spells, explaining the cause of the diseases to the patients. The attention to narrative medicine training in the Chinese medical diaspora explored in the original fifth theme was expanded upon in an article that featured interviews with non-Chinese overseas practitioners of TCM about their narrative practices related to improving their physician-patient relationships.

Finally, this issue includes four articles that contribute to a new sixth theme rooted in using narrative medicine to deal with specific clinical problems. One article focused on experience treating chronic urticaria (hives or hive-like rashes and swelling) from a narrative medicine perspective. Another article addressed how TCM emotional therapy combined with modern reproductive medicine can be helpful to improve infertility care. The third article within this theme argued that practitioners

<sup>1</sup> Affiliate Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin 14195, Germany

\* Marta Hanson, E-mail: mhanson4@jhmi.edu  
ORCID: 0000-0001-6190-7499

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should integrate methods from positive psychology into their acupuncture and massage practices to, for example, elicit the positive emotions within their patients necessary for recovery.

The collective intent of these ten contributions, according to this issue's guest editor Yang Xiaolin, is also fourfold in terms of developing the discipline of narrative TCM for modern TCM practice: 1) Exploration of the inherent inheritance relationship between TCM and Chinese narrative medicine practice; 2) Exploration of the narrative wisdom in narrative medicine and TCM; 3) Improvements of the professional narrative ability of doctors as well as the life and health narrative ability of the people; and 4) Application of narrative TCM in clinical practice to promote the high-quality development of TCM hospitals and departments.

The ten essays in this second special issue of *CMC* do their work well to further flesh out the contours of what constitutes this new discipline of narrative medicine in TCM. They also collectively demonstrate its potential to develop better narrative competency for all people—physicians, nurses, caregivers, and patients—and institutions involved in improving doctor-patient relationships and their healthcare outcomes.

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Marta Hanson drafted and revised the manuscript.

### Conflicts of interest

Marta Hanson is an Editorial Board member of *Chinese Medicine and Culture*. The article was subject to the journal's standard procedures, with peer review handled independently of this Editorial Board member and her research groups.

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