

BOOK REVIEW

Recommending "Opening the Door of Chinese Medicine: An Introduction to Chinese Medicine for Western Readers"

Written by Prof. XIE Zhu-fan and Dr. XIE Fang

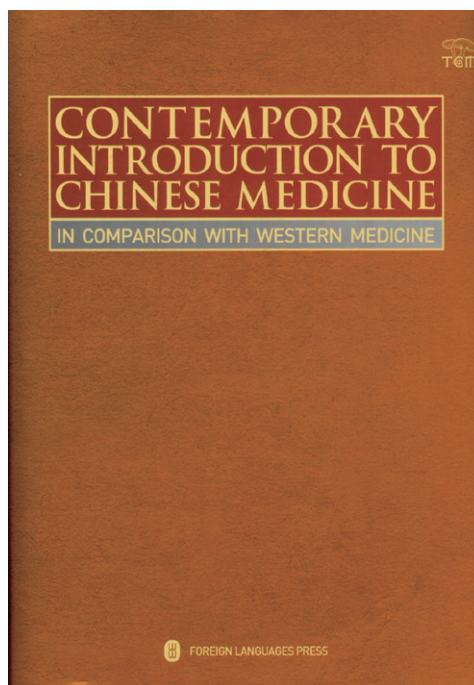
(Foreign Languages Press, P. R. China, 2009 ISBN 978-7-119-06484, 397 pages)

CHEN Ke-ji (陈可冀) and JIANG Yue-rong (蒋跃绒)

Contemporary Introduction to Chinese Medicine in Comparison with Western Medicine, recently published by China, is exceptional and worthwhile reading, especially for Western readers. It is authored by Professor Xie Zhu-fan in collaboration with Dr. Xie Fang. Professor Xie is a renowned scholar of both Western and Chinese medicine in China, and the Director Emeritus of Peking University Institute of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine.

The book consists of five chapters, with 397 pages. Chapter I elucidates the cultural backgrounds of Chinese medicine from three aspects including ancient Chinese philosophy, ancient Chinese language and China's scientific tradition. Chapter II expounds basic theories of Chinese Medicine, such as theories of Essential Qi, Yin-Yang, Five-Elements, Visceral Manifestations, Meridians and Collaterals and cause of disease, with in-depth analysis of cultural influences and comparison between Chinese medicine and Western medicine at philosophical level. Chapter III discusses diagnostics, especially the Four Examinations such as inspection, listening and smelling, inquiry, palpation as well as Syndrome Differentiation (Pattern Identification). The difference and relationship among Symptom, Disease and Syndrome Pattern are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter IV highlights the therapeutic principles, basic knowledge about Chinese medicine, and the Eight Methods of treatment. Chapter V offers discussions on treatment of those diseases commonly seen in the West, such as allergies, essential hypertension, coronary heart disease, chronic gastro-intestinal diseases, diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome, cancers and arthritis.

As far as the special features of this book, the first is the meticulous English adaptation of Chinese medical nomenclature and faithful maintenance of Chinese cultural characteristics. The second feature is that it stands on the Western reader's perspectives to



ensure that the essence of Chinese medicine is easy to study, understand and apply. For example, in some nomenclature, it lays out the corresponding Chinese word and Pinyin name like "证 (zheng)" next to the detailed explanation and illustration for syndrome pattern. As to the principles of composing a compound formula, the book expounds and exemplifies the role of the courier or guiding ingredients, a direct translation of the Chinese term (使药, shiyao), such as licorice to harmonize the other ingredients or kudzu vine root to guide the accompanying ingredients to the yangming (阳明) meridian. The third feature is that the book pays much attention to the most updated treatment of common diseases. Taking essential hypertension as an example, it discusses not only the

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syndrome differentiation and treatment in Chinese medicine, but also the recent advances of Chinese medicine with evidence of randomized controlled clinical trials, modern pharmacological studies, and superiority and inferiority of Chinese herbal medication to Western antihypertensive treatment.

As pointed out by Professor Xie, "this book is not intended to cover all the issues of Chinese medicine, but rather aimed to discuss the aspects that are most

unique and beneficial or complementary from the Western perspectives (p. 258)."

The book is fluent and easy to read. Professor Xie did an excellent job in presenting an extremely handy and practical tool of highest professional standards for Western readers of our time.

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Edited by TAO Bo