

Healthy People – Healthy Wildlife

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Tiger Bones, Rhino Horns, Bear Bile, Manchurian Ginseng and Traditional Chinese Medicine Practice in Australia

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Tiger bones, rhino horns, bear bile and Manchurian ginseng. These words, these beings are a trademark of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) in the West, including Australia. Customs, quarantine and wildlife officials as well as environmental groups are now on the lookout for practitioners and importers in possession of medicines containing endangered species. People ask "if these poor animals are becoming extinct why do these Chinese practitioners just keep on using them? Don't they have any concern for these beings?"

To answer these questions thoughtfully and sensitively, we have come to terms with a few things. First, TCM has been in our midst for more than one and a half centuries. For most of that time, we kept them as the "other". Digging for materials into the early history of TCM practitioners in Victoria, where do we find them? We find them as "the other" subjected to racial abuse in the pages of the Australian Medical Journal and the Victorian Hansard. We find them as "the other" in newspapers answering all sorts of charges and embroiled in all sorts of controversies. We find them listed as "the other", as "quacks" in Ludwig Bruck's *List of Unregistered Practitioners* appended to *The Australasian Medical Directory and Handbook 1886*, Bruck 1983). This history is not irrelevant to the fact that now we find them being framed as the "culprits" responsible for the extinction of the wildlife we all care for.

In short, Australia has come to terms with the presence of the "other" in our midst. TCM is now part of the Australian tradition of health care. We need to understand that TCM is undergoing change and development in response to Australian conditions.

Let us understand something of TCM practice, as much as any element in that system, so we can make an informed and generative response to the issue of the role of animal products in its practice.

TCM Practice of *Li Fa Fang Yao*

TCM is a system of medical practice embedded in the ethic which understands health-as-balance. The general aim of therapy is the restoration of balance from imbalance and preventing imbalances. Parallel to the recognition of the varied manifestations of health-as-balance and disease as imbalance, over the thousands of years, is the realisation of the role of *yao* in the complex workings of TCM practice. The logic of TCM practice is inscribed in the four Chinese words *Li Fa Fang Yao*, which may be translated into English as "choosing an individual *yao* for a formula on the basis of the established therapeutic method and principle" (Tiquia 1996).

The *li* is the principle, which explains why, and how diseases or clinical patterns come about. In TCM, diseases manifest themselves in a multitude of clinical patterns or *zheng hou*. These clinical patterns (of which more than 2,000 have been observed, collated and recorded) can

indicate whether the disease is hot or cold in nature, located superficially or deep within the body, *Yin* or *yang*, developing acutely or slowly and whether it is causing disharmony of the organ and acupuncture channel system in the body.

Once the *li* of a particular clinical pattern has been established, the stage is then set for deciding on a particular therapeutic method or *fa* for dealing with a specific clinical pattern. There is a choice of eight therapeutic methods: diaphoretic, emetic, downward, dispersing, mediating, warming, clearing, and tonifying methods. With a therapeutic method established, a therapeutic strategy or *fang* (or materia medica formula) is assembled to deal with a clinical pattern. This materia medica formula is made up of individual *yao*.

In several millennia of evolution and development, leaves, flowers, stem roots and fruits of certain plants, as well as minerals and animal-by products were found to address defined clinical patterns. Initially, individual *yao* were used indiscriminately and randomly to deal with certain ailments. Later a combination of *yao* was employed to deal with more complicated clinical patterns. In the process, a systematisation developed. Eventually, this evolved into the use of a group of *yao* in a formula to deal with complicated clinical patterns.

By observing and experiencing the effects of *yao*, (either individually or as a collection) on numerous clinical patterns or diseases, the medicinal or therapeutic action of thousands of plants, animal by products and minerals were coded and a system gradually emerged.

The Yao - "All substances which treat diseases"

Exactly what is *yao*?

Yao is a Chinese word for which an equivalent English word is very difficult to find. It has been loosely translated into "herb", an English word which refers only to plants. Whereas in TCM practice, remedies generically include plants, animal by-products and minerals etc. Sometimes, the word *yao* is translated as "remedies", a term which suffers from being too general. Some people translate *yao* as "materia medica". *yao* as "medicine" Wieger, Wilder and Ingram translate *yao* as "medicine" (Wilder 1974, Wieger 1965).

The *Chinese Medical Dictionary* defines *yao* as "all objects or substances which can be used to treat diseases". All these "materials", or *wu*, include animals, plants and minerals which have been classified and tested in accordance with the Eight Guiding Methods of Distinguishing *yao*. The *yao* also includes the "Five *yao*s" of ancient times, which are grass, trees, insects, stones, minerals and grain (Xie 1921). The Kang Yan Classical Chinese Dictionary defines *yao* as "those categories which can heal diseases such as grass, trees, metal, stones, birds, beasts, insects, fishes" (Chen 1716). The ancient Chinese script dictionary *Shuo Wen* defines *yao* "the grass or herb which cure illnesses" (Xu Zhen (Han) 1981).

The ancient Chinese script for *yao* is made up of symbols for bells and a drum set on a wooden platform with a radical script representing plants or grass on top. So *yao* refers to orchestration of music which can provide pleasure and joy, just as properly used medicines restore balance, health, freedom from illness, pain and suffering and hence pleasure and joy in life.

A nationwide resource survey covering 80% of China's land area, conducted over a period of five years beginning in 1983, revealed that there are now 12,807 *yao*, or "materia medica" used in China. Of this number, 11,146 are of plant origin; 1,581 are from animal origin and 80 are from mineral resources (Zhang 1995)

Out of 12,807 *yao* or materia medica, only 1,200 are considered and categorised as *yao cai* or materia medica material (ie individual *yao* that has been initially processed *pao zhi* and commodified for clinical use).

Out of the plant materia medica material 200-250 are plant roots; 180-230 are seeds or fruits; 160-180 are from whole plants; 70-80 are flowers; 50-60 are leaves; 30-40 are tree barks; 40-50 are crawling vines and 20 are fungus and mushrooms.

Of the 1,581 species of animals used as a medical resource, 1,306 are terrestrial animals and 275 are marine animals.

There are 412 species of fish used as *yao*. These fish species are:

1. Carp family 70 species
2. Tetraodon family (globe fish, balloon fish, puffer) 18 species
3. Syngnathus family (sea otter, pipe fish) 15 species
4. Loach family 12 species
5. Butterfish family 11 species

There are 39 species of amphibians used as *yao*. Some of them are:

1. Frogs family 13 species
2. Toad family 5 species
3. Tortoise and soft-shell turtles 17 species

Among the reptiles used as *yao* are:

1. Snakes 64 species
2. Lizards 34 species

Birds

1. Ducks 27 species
2. Pheasants 21 species
3. Hawk and eagles 14 species
4. Crows 10 species
5. Pigeon and doves 10 species

Among the terrestrial mammals are the following *yao*:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Tiger | 9. Hedgehog |
| 2. Black Bear | 10. Oriental Bat |
| 3. Sika deer | 11. Field rabbit |
| 4. Red Deer | 12. Flying squirrel |
| 5. Forest musk deer | 13. Badger |
| 6. Original musk deer | 14. Donkey |
| 7. Ox or cattle | 15. Leopard |
| 8. Otter | |

Out of the 1,581 species of animals used as *yao*, 160-220 species are categorised as materia medica material or *yao cai*. Among them 30-40 are invertebrates; 30-40 are insects; 40-60 are fishes and reptiles; while there are 60-80 beasts (Zhang HY 1995).

The use of *yao* in China has a history of 4 millennia. Information about them has been compiled, written, publicised and referred to as *ben cao*. *Ben* refers to a book or bound manuscript; while *cao* refers to shrubs or herb. *Ben* also means the root of a plant, which can also mean "origin". The first *Ben cao* was the *Shen Nong Ben Cao*, written in the year 1-2 BC. Shen Nong refers to the "Divine Farmer" who is a mythological personage who supposedly tasted one hundred *yao* to distinguish the medicinal from the poisonous ones.

The *Shen Nong Ben Cao* documented 365 materia medica or *yao*, which included 252 plants, 67 animals and 46 minerals. All these *yao* were classified into three grades. (Si YY 1984, p.24) .The use of the *yao ren shen* or ginseng was first recorded in this *ben cao*. The *Collection and Annotations on the Ben Cao Classic* written by Tao Hong Jing in 500 AD increased the number of *yao* collected and compiled from 365 to 730. Based upon their origins, *yao* were classified into 10 different categories ie. Jade and stones, shrubs and trees, insects and beast, fruits, grain etc. In 657 AD, the first state sponsored compilation on *yao* was published which is the *Xin Xiu Ben Cao* or *The Revised Ben Cao*. Eight hundred and fifty *yao* were included in this collection which also featured illustrations. In this collection where 20 *yao* which came from outside the Han empire (Xue Y 1984). During the Song Dynasty the number of *yao* used increased to 984 with the publication of another state sponsored *ben cao*, the *Kai Bao Ben Cao* (Open Treasure Ben Cao) (Shang ZY 1989).

Over half a millennium ago, from 1552-1578 AD, the Chinese medical scholar Li Shi Zhen undertook a most comprehensive investigation into the materia medica resources in China. And after 26 years of scholarly work he published the celebrated volumes of the *Compendium of Materia Medica Ben Cao Gang Mu* which compiled information on 1,892 *yao* or materia medica. This volume which evolved into a very innovative system of classification of *yao*, included 1,094 plant materia medica; 443 animal materia medica; 275 mineral materia medica and 79 others (Xue Y 1984).

All these thousands of *yao* were classified into 16 categories (Qiang YM 1984) ie:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Water | 5. Grass or Herb | 9. Trees | 13. Shelled Creatures |
| 2. Fire | 6. Grain | 10. Implements and Utensils | 14. Fowls |
| 3. Earth | 7. Vegetables | 11. Insects | 15. Beast |
| 4. Metal-stones | 8. Fruits and Melons | 12. Scaled Creatures | 16. Humans |

This tradition of compiling information on the *yao* continued up to the modern times with the publication of the *Encyclopaedia of Traditional Chinese Medicinal Yao Zhong Yao Da Ci Dian* with 5,767 entries on various *yao* (Bensky D et.al. 1986).

***Yao* and the West**

Following the Opium War, China's ports were forcibly opened to Western medicines which brought with it the culture of pharmaceuticals and drugs. Correspondingly, TCM and *yao* underwent radical changes. These changes were reflected in the content of the *Yao* pharmacopoeia or *ben cao* published during that time. The book *Records of Traditional Chinese*

and Western Medicine in Combination authored by Zhang Xi Chun (1918-1934) includes 45 Western pharmaceuticals among its listing of *Yao*. The entries on the names of pharmaceuticals were in English and Latin. Some of which are *Aspirin*, *Aether*, *Acidum hydrochloricum*, *Oleum Ricini*, *Magnesium Sulfurium*, *Natrium Chloratum* and *Adicum Coricum* etc. Another *yao* pharmacopoeia published in 1924 by Chen Ren Shan entitled *Distinguishing the Production Origin of Yao Substances* lists 54 "Chinese-Western *yao*" including menthol concentrates cod-liver oil, coriander seeds, manatee or sea cow found in Australia and the Indian Ocean. The fat of the fish is extracted and used as "cod-liver oil". Opium which was supposed to be produced in India and transported to China for use as *yao*. It is burnt and smoked which can "deplete one's treasures and harm the body", "words are not enough to speak of the harm it brings". An existing copy of the book *Distinguishing the Production Origin of Yao Substances* here in Australia originally belonged to the private library of TS Goon, a Chinese herbalist in Melbourne during the 1930s.

In Australia, no comprehensive study has been conducted yet on the *yao* used by TCM practitioners. However, a 1990 price quotation listing from two major wholesalers of *yao cai* (one from Sydney and one from Melbourne) reveal that the number of materia medica used by TCM practitioners as medical resource in Australia, range from 600-800 items. One of the price listing quotations with 767 materia medica materia or *yao cai* listed, included 695 items from plant origins; 30 from mineral origins; 17 from animal origins; and 3 items from human origins ie. hair ash, dried placenta and urine crystals. Among the animal *yao* are tiger bone gel, monkey bone gel, deer antlers, seal gonads, sea horse, pangolin scales, yellow inner lining of chicken gizzard, land tortoise shell, wingless cockroach, cicada moulting, antelope horn, dried earthworm and abalone shells etc.

Most of these *yao* materials are imported from Hong Kong and China. However, a growing number of *yao* (ie. plant, minerals and animals) are now being grown, developed and utilised locally. Examples of locally developed *yao* now available and in use in Australia are Ginseng (grown in the Victorian countryside) and seeds can be procured from local plant nurseries. Gingko biloba, arsenic (used to treat leukemia by Western doctors) (Wood 1998), garlic, ginger, spring onions, mung beans, adzuki beans, Nashi pears, seaweed, cattle gall stones, deer antlers. Seahorses are now being farmed in Tasmania. Unaware of their medicinal value, some of these *yao* are being exterminated as pests including cane toads, fennel, ragwort, camel thorn, wild teasel, St. Johns wort, mugwort, nutgrass, dodder etc. (Austen G 1988).

Using contemporary Chinese *yao* pharmacopoeias as a screening tool, I have scanned Australian botanical literature for Chinese plant materia medica growing here. So far, I have located about 243 species of Chinese plant *yao* growing locally in Australia.

Pharmacopoeia in China mainly document and list *yao* found in the northern hemisphere. Australia which is located in the Southern Hemisphere, has a different environmental profile and hence a correspondingly different *yao* profile. This is a potential area of research in the field of TCM which can not only increase the variety of *yao* and thus widen its application, but also more importantly enrich and transform the concept of *yao* itself.

Medicinal Value of the *Yao*

As we can see *yao* are medical objects and tools used to treat disease. They originate from plant, animal, mineral and even human products (ie hair ash etc). What is in these *yao* which construct their value as medicine? It is the nature of *yao* to embed a Qi. Qi assumes a Yin and Yang life; a motion dichotomising into dispersion, condensation, descending, ascending sinking, floating, expansion, contraction, moving in, moving out, hot and cold etc. Plants, animals, minerals, humans and non-humans all embedded in this "life". We might understand this as the emergence of entities which are "live" in this system. The metaphor of "live" here is not biologically live but more like the notion of a "live electric wire". The wire is "live" only within a particular configuration and particular understandings are needed to generate that configuration.

When the human body's Qi is out of balance (as in having a deficient Qi, Qi exhaustion, Qi stagnation etc), different categories of *yao* with an appropriate Qi nature (differentiated Qi) are used to restore the unbalanced Qi into balance. It is relatively easy for the Western mind to accept that biological organisms or even natural items like rocks have Qi. But it is much less easy to accept that a "contrived" object like a *yao* has Qi.

As medical objects and tools generating a dynamic Qi motion of floating (yang) and sinking (yin); rising (yang) and falling (yin); motion (yang) and rest (yin); expansion (yang) and contraction (yin); dispersion (yang) and condensation (yin), these *yao* when used to deal with illnesses, imbalance or disharmony in the human body were found to bring about balance, harmony and health.

Specifically, each individual *yao* is a "condensed Qi" with a specific nature or attribute vis-a-vis a defined clinical pattern. This specific nature of a specific *yao* is also referred to as its *pian sheng* or "inclination", "deviation", or bias. This specific nature of each individual *yao* defines its balancing or harmonising effect upon the body. Specifically, this means that every *yao* may be inclined towards being hot, cold, warm, cool, ascending, floating, descending, sinking, moistening, drying, sweet, pungent, sour, salty, bitter, tonifying, sedating, or associated or inclined towards a particular organ acupuncture channel, etc. For example, tiger bones as a materia medica has the inclination of being warm, pungent, and is inclined towards the Liver and Kidney organ systems. (Yan ZH 1991). Bear bile is bitter, cold and is inclined towards the Liver, Gall Bladder and Heart acupuncture channel. (*ibid.*); while the Manchurian Ginseng is sweet, slightly bitter and slightly warm and is inclined towards the Spleen and the Heart acupuncture channel (*ibid.*). The Rhino horn is cold, salty, sour and is inclined towards the Liver and Kidney organ meridian (Xie G 1988). As an individual *yao* with a "condensed Qi" "dispersed" into the human body it sets out its work of bringing about harmony from disharmony; balance from imbalance, illness to health.

In TCM practice, it is the complex manipulation of these varied Qi motions of the *yao* or a group of *yao* in a formula or *fang* which brings about balance or equilibrium to a diseased clinical pattern *zheng*. In general terms, the fundamental principle in restoring harmony or balance in TCM holds that "when the clinical pattern is hot, cool it; when cold, heat it; when deficient, tonify it; when excessive, purge it; when dry, moisten it; and when damp, dry it.

As in the case of the materia medica tiger bone what is its medicinal value?

With a pungent Qi, the tiger bone can disperse warm-up and open up the flow of Qi. It has both the characteristics of opening-up and tonifying. It can dispel pathogenic wind and dampness, open-up the acupuncture channels and collaterals and tonify the Liver and Kidney organ systems while strengthening the tendons and bones. It can settle palpitations with fear *jing ji* and stop pain. Hence it is used to stop pain associated with Bi-syndrome brought about by factors of Wind and Dampness. The pain in this condition is characterised by its shiftiness. There is restriction of movement and stiffness of the four extremities. It is highly recommended for wasting and feeling of weakness in both knees and feet brought about by deficiency of the Kidney and Liver Organ systems. (Yan ZH 1991).

From the above, we can see that the *yao* is a primary medical resource in the complex workings of the practice of TCM in Australia. It is not a given set of substances. It is a complex mix of Yin and Yang Qi motion, flavours, acupuncture channels, organ systems, inclinations, tendencies, plants, animals, minerals that are used to balance complex patterns of diseases. It is not static but rather a dynamic body of medical knowledge which can take on board new ideas, new inclinations and new tendencies in the struggle against disease and the maintenance of health and balance.

Yao is an integral part of the practice of TCM in Australia. The *yao* or materia medica is our professional tool, our "primary medical resource" (Geiser CR 1989). Within this wide range of medical resource are animal by products including tiger bones, bear bile, musk and rhino horn, plants and minerals "all materials or substances that can be used to treat disease." (Xie G 1921).

Materia Medica as Endangered Species

Having understood a little about our practice and the medical resources we use, we now come to the question of the use of *yao* in TCM practice.

Like most of you here, we as TCM practitioners in Australia are most concerned about the extinction of the tiger, rhino, bear and Manchurian ginseng. We are first to recognise the impact of their extinction for they constitute part of our primary medical resource. Hence, we support efforts that will enhance their continued survival. In some ways their survival is linked to the survival of our profession. The continued survival of our primary medical resources means the survival of our practice of *li Fa Fang Yao* in Australia.

However, we are concerned about the increasing numbers of animals and plants being put on the list of endangered species and the manner and ways by which decisions are made by certain agencies to put them in that list. This has implications to the dwindling number of *yao* we can use which poses a threat to the viability of our practice in Australia. A working manual used by one federal government agency includes the following very commonly used *yao* on their list of banned endangered species (*Mandarin Characters of Endangered Species Used In Herbal Medicines* undated). Each *yao* in this partial list is indispensable to our TCM practice.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | <i>Panax ginseng</i> | ren shen |
| 2. | <i>Pinellia ternata</i> | ban.xia |
| 3. | <i>Cibotium barometz</i> | gou ji zi |
| 4. | <i>Gastrodia elata</i> | Blume tian ma |
| 5. | <i>Panax quinquefolium</i> | xi yang shen |
| 6. | <i>Dendrobium nobile</i> | shi hu |

7. *Bletilla striata* bai ji

In addition, we would like to point out that recent campaigns against the use of some of our medical resources, for example tiger bones, bear bile and rhino horns, have led to a negative stereotyping of our practice. We have attempted to correct them but somehow, certain myths constructed around our practice by certain uninformed elements persist in our community. One of these "myths" is the notion that tiger bones, rhino horns and bear bile is used as "aphrodisiacs". This relates to an old elision between "the other" and "sex". Then there are those newspaper articles and electronic media coverage highlighting "exotic substances" used in TCM like deer penises, bull testes and seal penises (Tiquia R 1991).

Another image conjured in these campaigns is that of "cruelty" to animals, typified in the bear bile campaign. We are still reminded of the picture of the huge bear kept in cramped cages and then being milked of their gall bladder bile through surgical procedure (Tiquia R 1993). Question are then asked as to why the cruelty just to get the bile? What is the bile used for? The answer: TCM uses them as aphrodisiacs - a simplistic analogy is made. TCM equals cruelty to animals.

Using Leopards, Bats, Magpies and Pigeons

As part of a scheme in recent history to cast the then Chinese herbalists as "the other", their use of animal materia medica has been exploited in the past to devalue the *yao* they use, and in the process, devalue and de-legitimise their medical practice.

Almost seventy years ago in 1925, a controversy emerged in Victoria over the introduction of a bill in the Victorian Parliament called the Pharmaceutical Chemists Bill. The Bill would limit the prescription of medicinal herbs to chemists. The person who introduced the bill was a Western scientific medical practitioner and Member of Parliament by the name of Dr Argyle on the side of the government (Victoria Parliamentary Debate 1925).

During the second reading of the bill, Dr Argyle painted a veneer of illegitimacy over the qualification and nature of practice of the practitioners of herbalism. Furthermore, he focussed on the most marginalised section of the Herbalist Association, the Chinese herbalists. Three were members of the Herbalists Association and in directing his attack upon the nature of practice of the Chinese herbalists, he concentrated his assault upon the least understood and supposedly most "seamy" aspect of their practice, the use of animal *yao*. Here is a section from the Victorian Hansard which documents Dr Argyle's portrayal of TCM practice as abominable with its use of animals like bats and magpies, pigeons, leopards, "dragon spittle" and animal excrements.

Box 1: Excerpt from Victoria Parliamentary Debate. 28.10.1925 (pp.1911-1912).

"Dr Argyle: I now come to the Chinese. They use the most extraordinary things in medicine. The following extracts are from Frederick Porter Smith's book, to which I have already referred-

BAT

This animal is very common in China. Being a frequent visitor of foreign houses in quest of mosquitoes, which it devours most satisfactorily. As it is supposed to feed upon the stalactites, which are frequently met with in the caves which it is wont to hibernate in, its medicinal properties are rated at considerable value by the Chinese. From its asserted extreme longevity and its excellent sight, this curious creature is credited by the Chinese with the power of conveying these desirable qualities to

those who consume the disgusting preparations made from all parts of its body.

Mr. Cain- *That will not keep the people away from the Chinese herbalists*

Dr. Argyle.- *The people who keep away from the Chinese herbalists are the Chinese themselves. They always go to European doctors.*

DUNG

Common Sparrow

The excrement of the common house sparrow is mixed with peppercorns, powdered, and then mixed up by means of spirits of wine. This mess is used to diminish the pain of opening abscesses, the thick compound being first applied for some time to the skin. It is also applied to the wounds caused by arrowheads or shot to diminish the pain of extracting the foreign bodies.

MAGPIES

The nest of the magpie is burnt and the ashes given in nervous diseases, fluxes and other disease. The dung of a species of coturnix is perhaps mixed with the dung, which comes in the shape of small, oblong, round, or conical pellets, of a black colour, very light, easily broken, and having a burst or sweetish flavour.

Mr. Prendergast- *What is the difference between taking a piece of an animal to cure one disease and using thyroid gland from an animal for another disease?*

Dr. Argyle- *I have not noticed yet that any excrement is used in our work.*

It is said to be cordial, sedative, anti-periodic, astringent, anthelmintic, and vulnerary, with almost any other quality that could be enumerated. It is one of the remedies for leprosy, being applied to the benumbed parts in the form of ointment. The brain of the magpie is eaten to increase the thinking power.

WHITE PIGEON

The dung of the wild pigeon is used as a veterinary medicine, and is credited with discutient, deobstruent, alternative, anthelmintic, antiscorbutic, and vulnerary properties. The name "left coiling dragon" is given to this disgusting article, from the assumed fact that the excrement which, in dropping from the bird, coils itself from left to right, wonderfully efficient as a drug.

Dragon's Spittle

A costly, odorous, light-yellow, gummy substance found floating on the sea, or procured from the belly of some large fish in the Indian Ocean, is described in such a particular way as to leave no doubt that ambergris is meant. A similar substance is said to be the egg of the dragon, or a kind of sea-serpent. This drug is greyish or yellowish colour, according to Chinese writers, and is asserted to have marvellous discutient, vulnerary, and healing properties.

Leopard

The claws and bones of these animals are used in medicine as a tonic or prophylactic remedy. They are sometimes burnt and the ashes taken as a remedy in urinary disorders. The bones sold are seldom genuine.

Mr. Blackburn- *Is this the treatment the British Government allows natives to receive in Tong Wah Hospital?*

Dr. Argyle- *I cannot say. I can only say that this is from the textbook from which the Herbalists' Association in Victoria say their Chinese members get their education. The knowledge of herbs and their functions has not progressed to any remarkable degree during the past century..."*

First of all, Dr Argyle highlighted only animal materia medica from Porter Smith's book despite the fact that even during this time, most materia medica used by Chinese herbalists was derived from plants. In order to portray a negative image of Chinese medicine practice, most of the *yao* featured were derived from animal excrement. Inclusion of magpies and pigeons intended to inflame anger towards those who threaten our native birds. Note the technical terminology such as "discutient", "vulnerary", "deobstruent" to describe the medicinal uses. Like the word "aphrodisiac" they are all foreign to the technical terminology used in TCM practice.

This was how the stereotyping and blackening of TCM practice occurred during the 1920s in Melbourne. The aim was to devalue the practice of herbalism and herbalists, paving the way for "respectable white" chemists to monopolise the prescription of herbs. However more than 6,000 white patients of members of the herbalists association, signed a petition opposing the Bill, which forced the government to abandon the legislation (Victoria Parliamentary Debate 1925).

Proposals

An increasing number of medicinal resources used in the TCM practice, for example the tiger, bear, rhino and ginseng are becoming extinct. This is a legitimate concern for the Australian and international community and even of greater concern to TCM practitioners in Australia. Moves to find alternatives to the use of these species for medicinal purposes both in China and here in Australia are addressing some of these concerns.

However, the problem of the increasing number of our medicinal resources being included in the "endangered lists" thus leading to price escalations and difficulty in procuring them threatens the viability of our practice. A more transparent system, which draws up the list of endangered yao species, must be put into place. This system should work closely with the TCM profession and related industries. In addition, negative campaigns focused upon one-sided, uninformed and misleading information about the medical resources we use in our practice especially animal based medicinal resources are threatening the legitimacy of their use and specifically the use of yao in general.

Hence, it is proposed that a comprehensive study be conducted on the state of the medicinal resources used by TCM practitioners in Australia. In this way, we can have an inventory of yao used in traditional medicine including plants, animal and mineral resources. In this study, there will be an emphasis upon finding alternatives to those yao, which are becoming extinct. Concurrently, a clinical evaluation technique evolved from the practice of TCM in Australia should be developed to test the efficacy of yao used in TCM clinical practice.

Secondly, to prevent the stereotyping of the practice of TCM in Australia, an education campaign should be conducted which can raise community awareness on TCM as a tradition of health care that is part of our pluralistic medical system and not as "the other". In this TCM awareness campaigns the focus will be on how this Australian tradition of health care can complement the knowledge base and medical resources of other medical traditions in promoting the health and wellbeing of Australians.

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