



Editorial

Integrative Medicine: The Inevitable Direction of Future Medical Development



Daiming Fan*

State Key Laboratory of Holistic Integrative Management of Gastrointestinal Cancers and National Clinical Research Center for Digestive Diseases, Xijing Hospital of Digestive Diseases, Fourth Military Medical University, Xi'an, China

Received: September 25, 2023 | Revised: October 14, 2023 | Accepted: December 04, 2023 | Published online: December 21, 2023

In contemporary times, scientific and technological advancements have deepened our understanding of the human body. Our knowledge has evolved from a macroscopic understanding of organs, tissues, cells, and organelles to a more intricate exploration at the molecular level. Medical knowledge has grown at an accelerated pace, following a geometric progression and giving rise to an extensive knowledge system. Contemporary medicine has made remarkable strides in unraveling the intricacies of the human body and understanding various diseases. However, it is essential to acknowledge that humanity still grapples with the lack of solutions to numerous diseases that seriously endanger human health. This is particularly evident in chronic diseases linked to metabolism, age-related diseases, malignant tumors, viral diseases, and others. Currently, the field of medicine is becoming increasingly specialized, with research perspectives exploring finer details. However, our understanding of the human body and diseases remains incomplete. A shift from a reductive analytical approach to a holistic view and the integration of systems is emerging as the overarching trend in medical development.

Holistic integrative medicine (HIM) is an emerging medical discipline that combines the most effective clinical experiences and the most advanced theoretical knowledge across diverse medical specialties.¹ Guided by holistic and systematic perspectives, HIM aims to address the evolving needs of human health development. Fragmented knowledge falls short in addressing complex health problems. Just as in sociology, the maxim “unity is power” holds true in medicine, *i.e.* the strength lies in integration. The introduction of the concept of integration in the medical domain indicates a shift in modern medicine. Integrative medicine is emerging as an inevitable and essential direction for future medical development. The challenge lies in popularizing this epistemology and methodology and applying it widely in medical practice. The inception and evolution of modern medicine have been dominated by reduc-

tive and analytical thinking, leaving a noticeable gap in holistic and systematic thinking and practice.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is a prominent branch and an exemplar of traditional medicine worldwide. Originating in China, TCM boasts a comprehensive system, maintaining its originality and finding widespread application in clinical practice. It represents a noteworthy contribution of the Chinese nation to the development of world civilization through its advanced medical concepts that encompass a holistic view.² In both the theory and practice of TCM, the human body is consistently perceived as an organic whole, emphasizing the unity of the human body with its natural and social environment. In disease prevention and treatment, beyond addressing pathogens and specific organs, TCM emphasizes intervening and regulating human functions through cross-organ dialogue with an indirect action pattern.^{3,4} It leverages the human body's innate self-repair capabilities to treat diseases, which is a distinct feature that sets TCM apart from modern medicine. TCM presents a unique medical model that consistently views each organ of the human body (*zang-fu*) as a holistic system—an aspect that is missing in modern medicine. Interestingly, various traditional medicines from around the world share similarities with TCM, especially in their holistic and systematic thinking. Therefore, the advancement of integrated medicine can benefit from learning and drawing upon the knowledge and experiences of traditional medicine systems such as TCM.

The convergence of TCM theory and practice with modern science and technology has the potential to serve as a breakthrough in the life sciences and healthcare industry over the next decade. By aligning with the principles of TCM, integrating modern medical technology, and incorporating biomedical knowledge into the framework, we expect to foster a more scientific and practical medical system, which we term “future integrated medicine”.

In the realm of integrative medicine, the inception of the journal *Future Integrative Medicine (FIM)* marks a significant step toward “promoting the innovation of future medicine”.⁵ *FIM* is dedicated to the exploration and synthesis of the latest theories and achievements in patient-centered integrated medicine, aiming to improve human health across physical, psychological, social, and environmental dimensions. This journal is committed to covering all facets of complementary and alternative medicine, including TCM, integrated approaches combining research in Chinese and

Abbreviations: *FIM*, *Future Integrative Medicine*; HIM, holistic integrative medicine; TCM, traditional Chinese medicine.

***Correspondence to:** Daiming Fan, State Key Laboratory of Holistic Integrative Management of Gastrointestinal Cancers and National Clinical Research Center for Digestive Diseases, Xijing Hospital of Digestive Diseases, Fourth Military Medical University, Xi'an 710032, China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2466-5002>. Tel: +86 29 84771501, Fax: +86 29 8477146, E-mail: fandaim@fmmu.edu.cn

How to cite this article: Fan D. Integrative Medicine: The Inevitable Direction of Future Medical Development. *Future Integr Med* 2023;2(4):179–180. doi: 10.14218/FIM.2023.00000.

Western medicine, traditional medicine, and alternative and complementary therapies from India, South Korea, and other countries, especially in the case of some rare diseases.⁶ *FIM* also welcomes articles that adopt a systemic and comprehensive view of modern biomedical, pharmacological, and toxicological research incorporating the latest theoretical explorations or conjectures in related fields, along with forward-looking opinion pieces.⁷ The journal aims to advance the promotion and clinical application of traditional medical theories, providing an international platform for the exchange of academic ideas, fostering the training of integrated medical professionals, facilitating the fusion and progress of TCM research and global traditional medicine, and ultimately enhancing the international influence of TCM.

Integrative medicine represents the future trajectory of medical development. Within this landscape, TCM emerges as a crucial component of integrated medicine and a significant contributor to the evolving medical system. The development of integrated medicine in China should be steered by the nation's needs and the health needs of its people. In-depth research must be conducted, focusing on the diseases and areas where integrated Chinese and Western medicine exhibit significant advantages. This effort must aim to propel scientific research toward higher quality and elevated standards. At this opportune moment, we must shoulder our responsibilities, capitalize on our existing strengths, and strive to take a leading role in international integrated medicine. This commitment will contribute to China's economic and social development and align with the implementation of national health strategies.

Acknowledgments

None.

Funding

This editorial received no specific grant from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency.

Conflict of interest

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

References

- [1] Fan D. Holistic integrative medicine: toward a new era of medical advancement. *Front Med* 2017;11:152–159. doi:10.1007/s11684-017-0499-6, PMID:28044221.
- [2] Zhang Z, Zhu M. Holistic view of TCM on cancer integrative therapy. *Future Integr Med* 2023;2(3):159–167. doi:10.14218/FIM.2023.00048.
- [3] Wang JB, Xiao XH. On indirect actions of Chinese medicines and innovation of indirect-acting Chinese medicines. *Zhongguo Zhong Yao Za Zhi* 2021;46(21):5443–5449. doi:10.19540/j.cnki.cjcmm.20210978.601, PMID:34951194.
- [4] Gao Y, Wang JB. Commentary: Indirect action pattern: A remote and cross-organ pharmacological mechanism for drug innovation. *Acta Pharm Sin B* 2022;12(8):3448–3450. doi:10.1016/j.apsb.2022.05.025, PMID:35967286.
- [5] Wang J, Xiao X, Khan I, Liu Q. Announcing a new journal: Future integrative medicine. *Future Integr Med* 2022;1(1):1. doi:10.14218/FIM.2022.00000.
- [6] Yang X, Wang T. Visual analysis of research hotspots in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis based on bibliometrics. *Future Integr Med* 2023;2(3):168–178. doi:10.14218/FIM.2023.00019.
- [7] Zhao Y, Cheng C, Gao Y, Wang J. Integrative review on the chemical components, pharmacology and toxicology of *psoralea Corylifolia* L. (Bu Gu Zhi). *Future Integr Med* 2023;2(1):36–47. doi:10.14218/FIM.2022.00051.