From the Associate Editor

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Associate Editor, Hawaii Medical Journal

The University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM)’s Center for Chinese Studies and the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM)’s Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Department co-sponsored an hour-long seminar presented to a standing-room-only audience at JABSOM at noon on Tuesday, November 25, 2003.

Dr. Zhan Wentao, Director of the Chinese Medical Association and Editor-in-Chief of Yunnan Province’s Journal of Chinese Medicine, discussed The Experience of Chinese Medical Treatment of Arteriosclerosis and Coronary Heart Disease. Dr. Zhan Qing, Director of the Chinese Society of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine and Deputy Neurology Director at Shanghai’s Tongji University, then described Chinese Medical Treatment of Paralysis Assisted by Western Medicine. Presentations, 15 minutes each followed by question and answer sessions, were in Chinese and were translated by the JABSOM Cardiovascular Center’s Ping Au Li, MD, PhD. Dr. Zhan Qing is Dr. Zhan Wentao’s daughter.

The senior Dr. Zhan pointed out that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is an ancient holistic system of health and healing, based on the notion of harmony and balance, and employing imperatives of moderation and prevention. TCM emphasizes diet and a responsible lifestyle, focusing on stimulating the body’s natural curative powers by means including herbal medicine, acupuncture, massage, and exercise. TCM advocates moderation in all things and believes in treating patients with similar complaints or diseases differently, based on the precept that one does not treat the disease alone rather the individual patient. TCM’s goal is to sustain harmony between yin and yang, opposing but complementary forces, thereby enabling free flow of qi, an invisible energy force. Qi flows freely in a healthy person, but when weakened or blocked results in illness. He emphasized that in many cases TCM must not be substituted for, but should be adjunctive to, the practice of Western medicine.

Dr. Zhan continued that, according to TCM, heart attacks and angina are usually caused by stagnant qi in the heart meridian. This may be due to blocked arteries, microorganisms, poor diet, and other factors. Stagnant or absent qi may also become manifest as palpitations, shortness of breath, and a weak pulse. He then discussed means to invigorate and promote circulation of qi for treatment of signs and symptoms of coronary heart disease. In response to a question about the role of diet in preventing heart disease, he advised, “Eat everything in moderation.”

The junior Dr. Zhan then applied principles of TCM to adjunctive treatment with Western medicine of paralysis due to stroke. She described disharmony between yin and yang as resulting in two adverse outcomes: impendence in blood circulation to the brain, resulting in ischemic stroke, and excessive blood circulation to the brain with blood vessel rupture, resulting in hemorrhagic stroke. She illustrated her discussion with computer assisted tomography and nuclear magnetic resonance imaging of different types of stroke in patients. She advocated combined modalities of TCM for treatment of stroke, individualized to meet patient requirements, and in conjunction with Western medicine treatment. TCM strongly advocates educating individuals on choosing responsible lifestyles which may prevent stroke, a major source of mortality and morbidity in China.

Ronald C. Brown JD, UHM Director, Center for Chinese Studies, introduced the speakers. Rosanne Harrigan MSN, EdD, JABSOM CAM Chair, provided closing comments.

No strangers to Hawaii, the Drs. Zhan visited Honolulu in Summer, 2002, when he gave a standing-room-only talk on Traditional Chinese Medicine Approach to Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia at the invitation of the Aloha Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association, and discussed research and educational exchanges with JABSOM Dean Edwin C. Cadman MD.
Dr. Zhan Wentao emphasizes the precept of TCM advocating moderation in all things.

Dr. Zhan Qing describes TCM treatment of paralysis due to stroke.

Seminar faculty and participants besides the senior (fourth from right) and junior (second from right) Drs. Zhan include Chinese Studies Chair Dr. Brown (fifth from right, rear), and CAM Chair Dr. Harrigan (fifth from right, front).