RUTGERS HEALTH
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

# Global Healthcare Experiences in Shanxi, China

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## Overview

- Six-week traditional Chinese medicine shadowing program in Shanxi, China.
- Different approach in the healthcare system in China

## Background About China



- **Population**: China is one of the world's most populous country, with over 1.4 billion people
- **Geography**: Covering 9.6 million square kilometers, China is the third-largest country globally
- **Economy**: China is the second-largest economy in the world, driven by manufacturing, technology, and exports.
- **Culture and Language**: China has a rich history spanning thousands of years. Currently Mandarin is the official language.

## About Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

- **Holistic Approach**: TCM is based on a holistic view of the body, focusing on maintaining balance and harmony to prevent illness. It emphasizes treating the root cause of health issues rather than just symptoms.
- **Core Principles**: Central concepts in TCM include *Qi* (vital energy), *Yin and Yang* (balance of opposing forces), and the *Five Elements* (wood, fire, earth, metal, water), which are believed to govern body functions and health.
- **Acupuncture**: Inserting thin needles into specific points on the body to regulate energy flow and alleviate pain.
- **Herbal Medicine**: Using plant-based ingredients, minerals, and sometimes animal products in tailored formulas to treat various health conditions. It has been simplified nowadays, with premade medicine grind into crystals so patient can pour hot water and drink their medicine right away.
- **Cupping Therapy**: Using heated cups to create suction on the skin, which is thought to improve blood circulation and relieve muscle tension.
- **Tui Na Massage**: A therapeutic massage technique that targets acupoints to improve Qi flow and alleviate musculoskeletal issues.
- **Mind-Body Practices**: TCM includes *Tai Chi* and *Qigong*, exercises combining physical movement, breathing, and meditation to enhance mental and physical well-being.
- **Integration with Modern Medicine**: TCM is widely practiced alongside modern medicine in China, with many hospitals offering both TCM and Western treatments, especially for chronic pain and certain complex conditions.

## Healthcare System in China

- **Universal Healthcare**: China's government provides a basic level of universal healthcare through various insurance programs, aiming to cover all citizens, though rural and urban areas experience varying quality of care. Citizen need to pay copay and save up money for potential illness in the future.
- **Reforms and Development**: Significant healthcare reforms began in the 2000s to improve access and affordability, focusing on expanding insurance coverage and modernizing hospitals and clinics.
- **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)**: TCM, including practices like acupuncture and herbal medicine, is widely practiced and integrated with modern medicine, reflecting the country's cultural heritage in health practices.
- **Health Challenges**: China faces challenges such as an aging population, rising rates of chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, hypertension), and air pollution-related health issues, which impact public health policies. In addition to that, there's ongoing mistrust between healthcare providers and patients due to the lack of regulations.

## Goals For Study Abroad

- **Cultural Connection**: To deepen my understanding of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) as it is a part of my heritage, having grown up familiar with its practices.
- **Personal Experience with TCM**: To explore the healing potential of TCM further, as I've experienced its benefits firsthand, especially for conditions where Western medicine has limited options.
- **Healthcare Comparison**: To immerse myself in China's healthcare system and gain a firsthand perspective, allowing me to compare and contrast it with the U.S. healthcare system.

## My Experiences









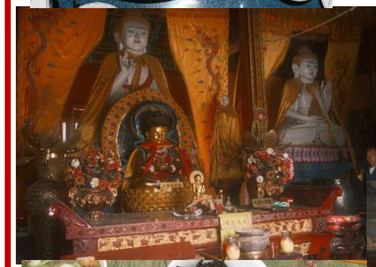



- I appreciated TCM's focus on addressing the root cause of health issues, which often includes lifestyle factors like diet, exercise, and mindset alongside genetics.
- TCM's emphasis on preventative care resonates with me, as it aims to maintain health proactively rather than waiting to treat symptoms.
- Seeing Dr. Zhang integrate Western diagnostic tools with TCM was impactful; his belief in using resources like blood-work and X-rays, when available, highlighted a balanced, practical approach.
- TCM can face mistrust, as treatment heavily depends on the practitioner's experience, leading to variations in care uality.
- TCM's focus on long-term healing often requires extended treatment periods, which can lead to patient frustration if results aren't immediate, causing some to stop treatment early.
- I observed both pros and cons in the healthcare system.
- Pros: Immediate access to specialists without extensive wait times or referral requirements; affordable consultation fees based on physician status; and the convenience of comprehensive, same-day check-ups, reducing the need to take multiple days off.
- Cons: Many healthcare services require out-of-pocket payments, which may be a financial strain for some patients.

## Food & Places













## Conclusions

- This experience has solidified my appreciation for TCM's holistic and preventative approach, focusing on lifestyle and root causes of health issues rather than just treating symptoms.
- Observing how TCM can be combined with Western diagnostics has reinforced the potential benefits of an integrated healthcare model.
- Experiencing the Chinese healthcare system firsthand highlighted the contrasts with the U.S. system, from the accessibility and efficiency of specialist care to the financial implications of out-of-pocket payments.

## Acknowledgment

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