

Diffusion of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Pakistan: A pipedream for health care

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ABSTRACT

The spread of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in Pakistan has been seen as a viable way to improve healthcare and deal with the nation's mounting health issues. This perspective emphasizes the substantial obstacles and difficulties that prevent TCM from being widely adopted through an analysis of the historical context, policy environment, and social acceptance of it. The difference between ambitions for the spread of TCM in Pakistan and the actual situation on the ground is highlighted by this article. To prepare the way for a more significant integration of TCM into Pakistan's healthcare system, future research and policy activities should concentrate on developing regulatory frameworks, encouraging scientific collaboration, and raising awareness among healthcare professionals and the general public.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a system of traditional medicine developed in China that has a long history dating back more than 2,000 years. It is based on the principles of balance and harmony in the body, and the belief that health is achieved when the body is in balance and free of blockages or imbalances. TCM practitioners use a variety of techniques, including acupuncture, herbal medicine, dietary therapy, and physical therapy, to restore balance to the body and promote health and wellness. TCM is a hugely popular adjunct to Western medicine in China and has been fully institutionalized there [1].

Chinese officials and organizations have been actively promoting Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in different parts of the world as a way to increase awareness and understanding of the practice. China has supported research and development into TCM, including funding studies and clinical trials. This helps to increase the evidence base for TCM and make it more widely accepted as a viable treatment option.

Establishing TCM centers and clinics abroad, Participating in international conferences and events such as the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies and the World Health Organization (WHO). This helps to promote TCM to a wider audience and foster cooperation and collaboration with other countries. China has also provided training and education to practitioners in other countries through programs and initiatives such as the WHO's Fellowship Program in Traditional Medicine. This helps to increase the number of qualified TCM practitioners in other countries, making it easier for people to access TCM treatments [2].

The global emergence of TCM is a significant development given the hegemony of biomedicine around the world for the majority of this century. In fact, supporters refer to the twenty-first century as the "century of TCM." Continued adoption of TCM by established healthcare systems around the world is more probable. It is difficult to foresee how this process will turn out because local variables will play a role [3].

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a massive development initiative that intends to link China's Xinjiang region to Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan. It is a key part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which seeks to promote economic development and connectivity between countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is specifically related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and is being promoted as part of the health and wellness initiatives that are part of the overall development plans for the corridor [4].

The introduction of the CPEC Health Corridor is definitely the far-reaching highlight of the year, in addition to significant advancements in Pak-China health sector collaboration. Another wonderful development occurred in 2022 with the establishment of the Pak-China Traditional Medical Alliance in Jinan, China, by the China Academy of Chinese Medicine and China-Pakistan Medical Association. The alliance will promote cooperation in conventional herbal therapy by assisting with research, expert training, and the use of modern technology [5].

The Sino-Pak Cooperation Center for Traditional Chinese Medicine (SPCC-TCM) is a joint venture between the Pakistani and Chinese governments that aims to promote cooperation and exchange in the field of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). It was established in 2017 as

part of the CPEC project. The SPCC-TCM is intended to serve as a platform for cooperation and exchange between the two countries in the field of TCM. It is focused on promoting the development and dissemination of TCM in Pakistan and fostering cooperation and exchange between Chinese and Pakistani TCM practitioners and organizations. Some of the specific activities and initiatives undertaken by the SPCC-TCM include [6].

The World Health Organization working panel on the appraisal of TCM in treating COVID-19 infection, major findings indicate that TCMs are serviceable, particularly for moderate cases. Based on how long it takes patients with mild COVID-19 symptoms and adverse events to recover, For the symptomatic relief JHQG is a timid and tacit TCM. JHQG use in these patients would have substantial public health repercussions because the patients in the JHQG group had symptomatic improvement [7].

A ceremony was organized both offline and online to celebrate the successful conclusion of a clinical trial on the efficacy and safety of Jinhua Qinggan granules (JHQG), a TCM medicine, for treating COVID-19 patients in Pakistan, according to China Economic Net (CEN). Moin ul Haque, the Pakistani ambassador to China, and Nong Rong, the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, commended JHQG on its successful treatment of COVID-19 patients during the occasion and pledged their full support for the use of TCM in Pakistan [8].

People in Pakistan have used herbal remedies, particularly in the nation's rural and tribal regions, and traditional medicine has grown to be a significant source of healthcare. Pakistan has a long history of using medicinal plants to cure a variety of illnesses [9].

According to Prof. Liu Xinmin, a member of the World Health Organization's (WHO) expert advisory panel on traditional medicine and co-director of the Sino-Pakistan Cooperation Center on TCM, "Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and traditional medicine in Pakistan enjoy a wide range of collaboration in research and development, management, and production (SPCCTCM). It is necessary to take advantage of the beneficial interplay between the two systems in order to further our shared objective of enhancing public health. The industrial size and degree of TCM research and development have considerably increased in recent years. Pakistan can benefit from learning from China's management of its high-quality herbal medicine resources. Pakistan participates actively in international forums for exchange, and Prof. Liu urged that Pakistan and China work together to boost the reputation and influence of traditional medicine globally [10].

The market for healthcare management in Pakistan is enormous but with a middle-income status, a subpar healthcare system, and a population of about 197 million people, the healthcare provision is futile. In this, the contents of TCM bottles and the elements fueling TCM's expansion in Pakistan can be a pipedream for healthcare reforms.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests

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