



## Comparison of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Traditional Iranian Medicine in Diagnostic Aspect

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### Abstract

Iranian traditional medicine (TIM) has a long and old history from ancient periods up to now and it is used in prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and elimination of diseases in Persia and neighboring countries. In Traditional Iranian Medicine, physiological functions of the human body are based on 7 factors: Elements, Temperament, Humors, Organs, Spirits, Forces or Faculty, Functions. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with 3000-5000 year of history has a unique system to diagnosis and prevention of diseases. TCM with acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine is one of the most important parts in complementary and alternative medicine. The clinical diagnosis and treatment in TCM are mainly based on the yin-yang and five elements theories. The aim of present study is to assess differences of TCM and TIM in diagnostic aspect for this purpose we searched Iranian databases and 30 years review articles of the Chinese scholar database (CNKI, VIP...) and relevant articles published in Journals inside and outside of China without language restrictions. The results showed that diagnosis in TIM is mostly focused on urine analysis, smelling, and pulse-taking, while a diagnosis of diseases in TCM is mainly focused on tongue observation and pulse taking. It seems that through the time some parts of diagnosis are missed. If practitioners take advantages from traditional medicine and combine it with the science of western medicine, it could be a great help for integrative medicine. Our knowledge about each of the traditional medicine not only should not be against the other types of traditional medicine but also it should be a help for finding information about missed parts.

**Keywords:** Chinese Medicine, Iranian Medicine, Diagnosis, Pulse, Urine, Tongue

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Iranian Medicine (TIM) roots back to over 5000 years before Christ. Since Achaemenid era, Iranians' knowledge about medical herbs and traditional treatment has been well-known all around the world and in the end of Sassanid era, apart from Far East, GundiShapour has been the biggest and the most important medical center all over the world. Persian traditional medicine has been mixed with Persian culture, society, and theology [1]. The TIM looks at patients and diseases through an angle different from that of modern medicine. Modern medicine has an abstract supervision on the work of organs, tissues and genes, considering the disease as the driving force behind an imbalance in body performance. It does its utmost to strike a balance in organ, tissue or gene performance to cure the disease. The TIM, however, views man as one entity. Under TIM, a disease shows that the whole body is imbalanced. Hence, it tries to strike an overall balance [1].

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with 3000-5000 year of history has a unique system to diagnosis and prevention of diseases. TCM with acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine is one of the most important parts in complementary and alternative medicine [1].

The aim of present study is to assess differences of TCM and TIM in diagnostic aspect.

## 2. METHODS

We searched Iranian databases and 30 years review articles of Chinese scholar database (CNKI, VIP ...) and relevant articles published in Journals inside and outside of China without language restrictions. Furthermore, we investigated the current textbooks of Iranian medicine, the old versions written in ancient Iranian language and some in Arabic language, all the articles published about Iranian medicines in different journals inside and outside Iran on one side and on the other side the texts of Chinese Medicine about diagnosis aspects in the TCM.

## 3. RESULTS

### *Diagnostic Methods in TIM*

In TIM, the same way as in Western

Medicine, to acquire the correct diagnose we need to take a complete medical history about the present illness and also past medical history, family history. Then, practitioners perform a thorough systemic physical examination but with more emphasize on details of their findings such as different types of skin color, or different types of the pulse which mean different conditions [2].

First, the practitioner, (who is called a Physician in the West and a Hakim elsewhere) has to take a full case history. This will have many aspects, but generally includes observation of the patient, e.g., observing a patients posture and listening to their voice, observing the tongue and its coating, the eyes, the hands (skin color, etc.) and the fingernails. It also almost always involves taking the pulse, which often takes a little time, as the practitioner does not just take the pulse rate, but also looks for subtle changes in the pulse that may indicate present or threatening health conditions.

To acquire an accurate diagnosis first step is inspection 视: General appearance which is looking at the patient from the head to the extremities, and evaluating the size of the body and body mass, hair, skin color, speed of body movement, e.g., slow or rapid. Furthermore, looking at the patient's urine and the tongue. The second step would be palpation 触: it is more related to palpation of the skin (wet or dry, cold or warm), the abdomen and other organ, and also Pulse taking. Consequently, the third step is percussion 叩: In the most famous traditional medical book "canon of medicine" Avicenna says that percussion is used for differential diagnosis of diseases related to abdomen and chest. After percussion practitioner should ask some questions about work/hobbies, sleep-awake hours, defecation and urination, emotional status, physical activity, appetite, smoking and drinking that is interrogation 问. Next step that makes TIM more unique is smelling 嗅, Smell of the urine, smell of the sweat and body odor, and finally practitioners should analyze the urine in the aspect of color of urine, smell of urine, concentration of urine,

evaluation of particle sedimentation in urine [3].

In TIM, each patient has something the same as the other patient, but the individual's condition should be considered in treatment this is called the physical constitution. Thus, we cannot prescribe one prescription for everybody. Physicians need to see the individual's physiology, and should start treatment according to the individual's constitutions [4].

TIM considers that all disease processes are due to an imbalance in the four Humors, or at the very least implicate the four Humors [5]. When such an imbalance occurs, the person is said to be in "bad humor." The aim is always to find the cause of the underlying disruption of the Humor or Humors and whenever possible give this the main attention. The cause may be due to external factors, such as an injury, infection, exposure to poisons, incorrect diet, inclement climate, etc., or due to internal factors such as improper digestion, organic malfunction, abnormal temper, and disturbed emotions or may be due to a combination of these factors [6].

### 3.2 Diagnostic Methods in TCM

The clinical diagnosis and treatment in TCM are mainly based on the yin-yang and five elements theories. Five elements: Fire, Wood, Metal, Earth, and Water [7].

TCM focuses on health maintenance, prevention and in the treatment of disease emphasizes on enhancing the body's resistance to diseases. In TCM, the same disease may be treated by different therapeutic approaches and also one kind of disease may be treated with different therapies.

Diagnosis of TCM is a branch of study and help physicians to make diagnosis and syndrome differentiation. Diagnostic methods are a collection of information about condition of diseases. Four major methods of diagnosis are: "Inspection, Listening and Smelling, Interrogation, Pulse examination, and Palpation" [8]. "望、闻、问、切"

The first part of diagnosis in Chinese medicine is inspection 望, which is mostly consists of General appearance of the body,

Pattern of movement, excretion, physique, tongue observation. The first part of inspection is observing the general condition of the body such as complexion, physique, pattern of the movement and emotional status of the patient. The other part of inspection is observing the different parts of the body such as head and neck, face, five sense organs, body shape, and skin. The other part of inspection is tongue observation such as shape and structure of the tongue and also looking at the tongue coating.

The second component of diagnosis is listening and Smelling 闻 that is referred to collection of information from patient through the listening to the patient's voice, speech, respiration, coughing, hiccupping, signing, sneezing and smelling of the abnormal odor of body and excretions. The next step in diagnosis is interrogation 问 which is a way to collect information by asking questions about onset, progress of disease, chief complaint, lifestyle, family history and present illness. In this part also is important asking about cold sensation and heat sensation which are the subjective sensation of patients and also is necessary to ask about the quality, site, severity, duration, radiation of pain. Question about appetite and thirsty, urination and defecation, sleep pattern; female's and male's condition also is important. Finally, practitioner should examine the pulse 切 and collects information by taking the pulse and palpation of the skin, chest, abdomen, and points [9].

Table 1 represents comparison between TIM and TCM according to diagnostic methods.

## 4. DISCUSSION

In TIM, the goal of diagnosis is based on the diagnosis of the individual's constitution while in TCM it is based on syndrome differentiation according to patients' manifestation.

These two traditional medicines are common in the aspect of pulse diagnosis, but they are different in the aspect of urine and smelling and also tongue observation. Iranian medicine is more emphasize on smelling and urine analysis [10], while Chinese medicine is more focused on tongue observation.

**Table 1. Comparisons of methods of diagnosis in traditional Iranian medicine and traditional Chinese medicine**

Method of diagnosis in traditional Iranian medicine 伊朗医诊断方法	Method of diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine 中医诊断方法
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection 视</li> <li>• Palpation 触</li> <li>• Percussion 叩</li> <li>• Interrogation (Questioning) 听</li> <li>• Smelling 嗅</li> <li>• Urine Analysis 尿液分析</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection 望</li> <li>• Listening and Smelling 闻</li> <li>• Interrogation 问</li> <li>• Pulse examination, Palpation 切</li> </ul>
<p>Characteristic of traditional Iranian medicine:</p> <p>*Temperaments:</p> <p>Warm and Wet 热与湿</p> <p>Warm and Dry 热与干</p> <p>Cold and Dry 冷与干</p> <p>Cold and Wet 冷与湿</p> <p>*Humors:</p> <p>Blood 血</p> <p>Bile 胆汁</p> <p>Black bile</p> <p>Phlegm 痰</p> <p>*Urine analysis 尿液分析</p> <p>Color of urine, smell of urine, concentration of urine, clearance of urine, quantity of urine, evaluation of particle sedimentation in urine and Foam of the urine</p> <p>*Pulse taking</p>	<p>Characteristic of traditional Chinese medicine:</p> <p>*Pulse taking</p> <p>*Tongue observation</p>

The methods of Western medicine diagnosis with science and technology (Western diagnostic techniques) can be introduced to Chinese and Iranian clinical practice, which can improve the accuracy of Chinese and Iranian diagnosis and lead to an advantage for improving the medical efficiency in the clinical treatment.

If physicians can combine the theoretical study of western medicine and application of traditional medicines, then western medical doctors can take advantage of Traditional

philosophy and Traditional practitioners will know more about the Western Medicine.

In accordance with the WHO's strategy, the old but useful remedies should be integrated in the western medicine for the benefit of humanity and to achieve the best results in practice.

### 5. CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Authors have no conflict of interests.

### 6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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