

Bringing TCM to the world from Putuo hospital



Liu Guzhen, senior traditional Chinese medicine doctor at Putuo Central Hospital, explains TCM knowledge to a group of French students and practitioners who are on a two-week program in the hospital to sharpen their TCM skills. — All photos by Zhang Suoqing

Li Anlan

Developed thousands of years ago, traditional Chinese medicine has gained new acceptance around the world in recent times, and doctors increasingly are coming to China to learn from the best teachers.

Every summer, several groups of students from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Japan and South Korea come to Putuo Central Hospital for a two-week TCM program focused on acupuncture and massage techniques.

TCM is a comprehensive healing system that has various forms of treatment including herbal medicine, acupuncture, massage and more.

Liu Guizhen directs the rehabilitation department at Putuo Central Hospital and has been teaching overseas students for many years. She says the program has a very long history at the hospital.

"My teacher used to teach the students, too, before passing away," Liu said, noting that most came from Japan at that time.

Right now five TCM students and practitioners from France are participating in the program that's also supported by the international school of acupuncture at Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

After learning about common cases at the hospital, the students take classes about the fundamentals and observe and practice acupuncture under the instruction of teachers.

"It's not easy to explain TCM to them, and it's even harder for our



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Natacha Jakubowicz
French doctor

interpreter to translate things like different terms for acupuncture points into French," Liu said. "Studying TCM is not easy. We used to have to read literature in ancient prose."

She explained the five diagnostic methods of TCM to the group: inspection, auscultation, olfaction, inquiry and palpation.

"We use every case as a guide to teach them, learning the essence of TCM," Liu said.

Summer is a busy season for TCM doctors. They not only have regular patients, but also those who wish to treat and cure winter diseases in the summer, especially arthritis and asthma.

"There was a patient whose legs felt very cold even on hot summer days. She came for eight sessions of acupuncture treatment last year, and in winter she didn't suffer as much as she used to. This year she came again," Liu said. "The typical course of treatment for curing winter diseases in the

summer is three years."

Acupuncture can also help relieve symptoms like long-term diarrhea.

"They (the patients) were surprised when they found out the problem was gone," Liu said. "Most of the cases we treat are problems regarding joints, especially knees."

One treatment technique for curing winter diseases in the summer is to do moxibustion, a therapy using moxa made from dried mugwort to warm meridian points using needles combined with moxa to induce a smoother flow of blood and *qi*, or energy.

Liu said many schools abroad now teach TCM, and the students want to come to China to get practical experience.

"Some of the things their teachers taught are wrong. Here they can learn in the right way," Liu said.

Natacha Jakubowicz of Paris is at the Putuo hospital now, in her fourth year studying TCM.

"I wish to open my own clinic next year and treat people," she said. "I think TCM makes more sense because it's not simply treating a headache with painkillers, but finding the fundamental cause."

This is her first time participating in the program. "I got more practical experience in diagnosis and therapy than in France," she said. "We studied massage last week."

Not every country supports TCM though. Liu said Canada, Australia and Switzerland have legalized TCM, offering certification to doctors trained in it, while some countries, including France, have not.

That means physicians in those countries must offer TCM privately and it is unlikely to be reimbursed by insurance companies.



The French group members practice acupuncture under Liu's instruction.