

# On the International Dissemination of Zhuang Medicine

ZHANG Yan

Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China

TAO Jien

First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China

LIAN Yujie, CHEN Yingzhu

Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China

As an important part of Chinese culture, Zhuang medicine has a long history and unique diagnosis and treatment. With the international dissemination of Chinese culture, the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine has become an increasing concern. This paper aims to discuss the status quo, challenges of the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine, then puts forwards corresponding solutions and recommendations, so as to make Zhuang medicine known by the world.

*Keywords:* international dissemination, Zhuang medicine, intercultural communication

## Introduction

Chinese government attaches great importance to the development of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and ethno-medicine, including Zhuang medicine. The government of Zhuang Autonomous Region has successively issued a series of policies and measures, such as the “13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Guangxi's Traditional Chinese Medicine, Zhuang Medicine, and Yao Medicine” and the “Development Plan of Health Services for Guangxi's Traditional Chinese Medicine, Zhuang Medicine, and Yao Medicine (2016-2020)”, which provide solid policy guarantees for the inheritance and innovation of Zhuang medicine. With the country's emphasis and support on TCM and ethno-medicine, Zhuang medicine has been effectively popularized and promoted domestically, and it is also faced with the important task of external communication. Therefore, this paper is devoted to analyze the status quo of the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine, find out the challenges, and offer solutions and suggestions.

## The Status Quo of the International Dissemination of Zhuang Medicine

In recent years, scholars at home have conducted in-depth research on Zhuang medicine, encompassing its theoretical foundation, medicinal resources, clinical applications, and various other aspects. These research accomplishments have enriched the theoretical system of Zhuang medicine, but also provided solid academic

---

**Funding:** This paper is supported by Philosophy and Social Science Project of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (23FYY028), Natural Science Project of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (AD23026247), and the Collaborative Education Project of Ministry of Education of PRC (230701713184700).

ZHANG Yan, Ph.D., Lecturer, School of Foreign Languages, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China.

TAO Jien, MA, Associate Professor, First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China.

LIAN Yujie, MA candidate, School of Foreign Languages, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China.

CHEN Yingzhu, Ph.D., Lecturer, School of Foreign Languages, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China.

support for its international dissemination. However, the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine is still in its infancy. The following part will deliver some detailed information about it.

### **Academic Research and Publication**

An increasing number of research findings in Zhuang medicine have been published in renowned international medical journals. Some researches focus on unique therapies of Zhuang medicine, such as medicated thread moxibustion, needle picking and shallow needling (Tang et al., 2016; Fan, Shen, & Lin, 2022); some highlight the treatment of some diseases with traditional therapies of Zhuang medicine, for example, how to improve pain and joint dysfunction of patients in rheumatoid arthritis (Luo et al., 2020); some concern the pharmacological activities and mechanisms of action of Zhuang medicines, such as Longzuantongbi granules (Yao et al., 2022) and Xiancao granules (Mo et al., 2024). These articles, written in English, have effectively enhanced the visibility of Zhuang medicine within the global academic community.

In addition to academic papers, a series of bilingual (Chinese-English) monographs and textbooks on Zhuang medicine have been published, such as *Zhuang Medicine Culture*, *The History of Zhuang Medicine*, *Operation Standard of External Treatment with Zhuang Medicine Characteristics*, *Operation Specification and Application of Appropriate Technology for Zhuang Medicine*, etc. These books comprehensively introduce the historical origins, theoretical frameworks, diagnostic methods, and clinical application cases of Zhuang medicine, offering international readers a comprehensive window into this medical tradition.

### **International Exchange**

Guangxi International Zhuang Medicine Hospital Affiliated to Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine has regularly hosted training courses to promote the application of the diagnosis and treatment technology of Zhuang Medicine. However, such international training course is rare. In 2019, “Guangxi Zhuang Yao Medicine International Training Course for Young and Middle-aged People and International Training Course for Demonstration and Promotion of Traditional Chinese Medicine Characteristic Diagnosis and Treatment Technology” started in Nanning. The 15-day training course was attended by more than 400 medical workers and international students from eight Asian countries such as Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, India, Nigeria, and other countries, as well as teachers, students, and key doctors from affiliated hospitals in Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine and member units of Zhuang Medical Alliance. The training course focused on the development of Zhuang Yao medicine, the academic system of acupuncture and moxibustion of Zhuang medicine, its characteristics and clinical application, and the characteristic diagnosis and treatment technology and clinical application of traditional Chinese medicine, Zhuang medicine and Yao medicine, so as to further enhance the clinical service ability of ethnic medicine, provide standardized, safe, and effective medical services with ethnic medicine characteristics to patients all over the world, and demonstrate and apply advanced and appropriate technologies of Zhuang Yao medicine at home and abroad.

In December 2023, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine organized a team of seven experts to go to Vietnam University of Traditional Medicine and Haiphong University of Medicine to promote Chinese medicine and ethno-medicine. During the period, several characteristic therapies of Zhuang medicine such as medicated thread moxibustion, bamboo cupping therapy, and acupuncture of tian, yin, and yang in Zhuang medicine, were welcomed by Vietnamese traditional medical doctors, who enthusiastically asked questions and actively experienced the therapies.

## The Challenges of the International Dissemination of Zhuang Medicine

This part will delve deeper into the challenges faced in the areas of language and cultural barriers, standardization issue, as well as legal and regulatory restrictions for the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine.

### Language and Cultural Barriers

**Precision and accuracy of terminology translation.** Accurately translating specialized terms from Zhuang medicine into English requires not only linguistic proficiency but also a deep understanding of both medical systems. The lack of direct equivalents often necessitates the creation of new terms or explanations, which can lead to varying interpretations among readers.

**Context preservation and cultural relevance.** Besides the precision and accuracy of terminology, the culture entailed in Zhuang medicine is another issue. Many Zhuang medical concepts, for example, the names of Zhuang medical herbs, are rooted in cultural practices and beliefs of Zhuang people, which are difficult to convey in a foreign language without losing their original meaning and context. So ensuring that translations are culturally relevant and respectful to both the source and target cultures is crucial, as misinterpretations can perpetuate stereotypes or even offend some communities.

**Cultural diversity.** Medical beliefs encompass individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and convictions towards health, illness, treatment, and recovery. Different country has different medical beliefs. For example, American people tend to use modern medical technology and drugs when seeking medical services, while Chinese people tend to combine traditional Chinese medicine therapy with western medicine therapy. In some Asian countries like China, Korea, and Japan, acupuncture has been widely accepted, while in some Asian countries like India, Iran, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the popularity of acupuncture is still low.

Therefore, understanding and adapting to the diverse cultural perspectives and medical beliefs of international audiences is extremely essential for promoting Zhuang medicine. This includes acknowledging and respecting local medical practices and traditions.

### Standardization Issues

Currently, the standardization of English translation for Zhuang medical terminology remains at an outset stage, confronted with numerous challenges. Firstly, due to the particularity of the Zhuang language and the shortage of professional translators specialized in Zhuang medicine, domestic research on the English translation of Zhuang medical terminology is relatively scarce, leading to a lack of unified standards and norms in translation practice. Secondly, the unique theoretical system of Zhuang medicine encompasses a vast array of terminologies imbued with ethnic cultural characteristics, many of which have no direct equivalents in English, not to mention other languages, thereby escalating the complexity of translation. Furthermore, while Zhuang medicine and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) share some theoretical overlaps and similarities, they diverge significantly in terminology expression and cultural connotations, necessitating meticulous differentiation during the translation process.

In current translation practices, the English renditions of some Zhuang medical terminologies often suffer from issues such as linguistic confusion and a lack of standardization, which not only impede the development and research of Zhuang medicine itself, but also pose significant hurdles and detriment to the international exchange and dissemination of Zhuang medicine.

### **Legal and Regulatory Restrictions**

This part concerns the legal and regulatory restrictions encountered in the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine, mainly analyzing from two aspects: registration and approval, intellectual property protection.

**Registration and approval.** Navigating the complex regulatory frameworks of different countries, including stringent requirements for safety, efficacy, and labeling, can be time-consuming and costly. The varying registration and approval requirements across countries can create barriers to market entry and limit the reach of Zhuang medicine. Therefore, conducting international clinical trials to meet regulatory requirements can be expensive and logistically challenging, especially for smaller or niche medical practices.

**Intellectual property protection.** Determining the patentability of Zhuang medical knowledge and practices can be complex due to their historical origins and the potential for prior art. Enforcing intellectual property rights in different jurisdictions, especially against infringement by unscrupulous actors, can be difficult and costly. So balancing the need to protect intellectual property with respect for traditional knowledge holders and communities can be a delicate task, requiring careful consideration of cultural and ethical implications.

## **The Suggestions for the International Dissemination of Zhuang Medicine**

### **Promotion of the Standardization of Zhuang Medicine Terminology in English**

It is necessary to form an interdisciplinary team comprising Zhuang medicine experts, linguists, translation specialists, and medical English professionals to collectively advance the standardization of English translations of Zhuang medicine terminology to ensure accuracy and consistency in translation outcomes.

For the standardization of translation, an English-translated dictionary or terminology database for Zhuang medicine, provides norms and references for translation practices. Currently, the dictionary and terminology database are being

### **Cultivation of Zhuang Medicine Translation Talents**

Translation talents contribute greatly to the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine. The present talents training model should be modified, because the international dissemination of Zhuang medicine requires interdisciplinary talents not only proficient in Zhuang medicine but also in English. Then ESP courses such as English for Zhuang medicine should be introduced into the curriculum in medical school.

MTI program of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine is characterized with ethno-medical translation, especially translation of Zhuang medicine. So these translation majors should be encouraged to engage in translation practices of Zhuang medicine literature, enhancing their translation skills through hands-on experience.

### **Construction of Platforms for International Dissemination of Zhuang Medicine**

International conferences or seminars in fields such as medicine and traditional Chinese medicine to showcase Zhuang medicine research achievements and distinctive therapies, should be regularly enhancing its international reputation. Inviting domestic and foreign experts and scholars to engage in in-depth discussions and exchanges on topics related to Zhuang medicine, can not only facilitate the sharing of academic achievements but also strengthen ties and collaboration with international peers.

Forging partnerships with foreign medical schools, research institutions, and medical facilities can also facilitate international academic exchanges, research collaborations, and talent cultivation of Zhuang medicine.

### Strengthening the Promotion of Zhuang Medicine Culture

New media platforms can be utilized to promote Zhuang medicine culture. We can utilize the internet and social media to disseminate information about Zhuang medicine, broadening its international influence.

We can also create multimedia materials such as brochures and videos to introduce the historical origins, theoretical systems, and unique therapies of Zhuang medicine.

Like what Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine did in December, 2023, we can organize Zhuang medicine experts to conduct cultural exchange activities abroad, including lectures and free clinics, to foster understanding and trust in Zhuang medicine among foreign populations.

### Conclusion

To do a summary, this paper delves into the current situation and challenges of international dissemination of Zhuang medicine, then offers some strategies or solutions. The international dissemination of Zhuang medicine is still in early days, therefore there is a lot to do. The future research can focus on the standardization of terminology, the cultivation of Zhuang medicine translation talents, the translation of Zhuang medicine, the promotion of Zhuang medicine culture, etc.

### References

- Fan, X.-T., Shen, X. S., & Lin, C. (2022). Treatment of insomnia in suboptimal health status with Zhuang medicine herbal-thread moxibustion: A randomized clinical trial. *World Journal of Acupuncture-Moxibustion*, 32(4), 336-341. doi:10.1016/j.wjam.2022.07.008
- Huang, H. R. (2023). Improve the influence of Zhuang medicine and Yao medicine, and expand the dissemination of Zhuang medicine and Yao medicine. *Study on Zhuang Medicine and Yao Medicine*, 7(2), 7.
- Luo, Y. H., Xu, D., Cao, Z., Chen, Q., Wang, L., Fang, G., & Pang, Y. (2020). Traditional therapies of Zhuang medicine improve pain and joint dysfunction of patients in rheumatoid arthritis: A protocol for systematic review and meta-analysis. *Medicine*, 99(39), e22264. doi:10.1097/MD.00000000000022264
- Meng, J., Song, N., Qin, Z. J., & Huang, J. M. (2016). Standardization and suggestions on English translation of Zhuang medical terminology. *Chinese Journal of Ethnomedicine and Ethnopharmacy*, 24, 11-13+17.
- Mo, C., Zhao, J., Liang, J., Chen, Y., Wang, H., Dai, Y., & Huang, G. (2024). Effects of Zhuang medicine compound Xiancao Granule on diabetic kidney disease: A multi-omics analysis. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 321, 117517. doi:10.1016/j.jep.2023.117517
- Tang, H., Zheng, J., Li, T., Li, K., Li, X., Dou, X., Huang, C., & Liang, Y. (2016). Effect of combined medicated thread moxibustion plus needle picking therapy of Zhuang nationality medicine on antioxidant levels in a rat model of sciatica. *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 36(6), 784-788. doi:10.1016/S0254-6272(17)30015-8
- Yao, L., Cheng, S., Yang, J., Xiang, F., Zhou, Z., Zhang, Q., Pang, Y., Zhou, W., & Abliz, Z. (2022). Metabolomics reveals the intervention effect of Zhuang medicine Longzuantongbi granules on a collagen-induced arthritis rat model by using UPLC-MS/MS. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 294, 115325. doi:10.1016/j.jep.2022.115325