

Research Strategies and Use of Fondren Library Resources

During elementary school, in response to the often asked question of “what do you want to be when you grow up?” I would always answer “a doctor.” Even now, if one were to ask me that same query, I would still give the same answer. Thus, it comes as no surprise that I was quite enthusiastic about taking a course called Medical Communications at Rice, taught by Dr. Elizabeth Festa. Throughout the course, I explored new perspectives of what being a doctor truly means, especially in America. I read about the technocratic model of medicine, ideologies that put biological determinants of disease on a pedestal, and countless patient accounts of the difficulty communicating with doctors, and dealing with the impersonal figure that is American health care. Previously, western medicine was a glowing example of first rate care in my mind, so the introduction of thought provoking and stereotype banishing material in Medical Communications provided a huge impetus for me to learn more. I realized then that I had to learn more about western biomedicine, and perhaps look into other paradigms of health care. A research project assigned by Dr. Festa was the perfect opportunity for me to delve deeper. As I recalled my past experiences with traditional Chinese medicine, I decided to research the possible integration of traditional Chinese medicine in the U.S. health care system, in order to provide the best health outcomes for patients in America. Therefore, the use of various resources, such as the online book catalog, articles and databases, and full text subscriptions at Fondren Library were indispensable to my project.

The first step of my research project was to obtain a basic understanding of the fundamental tenets of traditional Chinese medicine. Thus, I turned to Fondren catalog for books. There, simply by searching with the subject of traditional Chinese medicine, I found a wealth of information on the principles of traditional Chinese medicine. After perusing many texts that all

wrote about the ideologies and practices of traditional Chinese medicine, I ultimately included several sources that were key to explaining the underlying concepts of traditional Chinese medicine in my project. For example, Wang, Chen, and Xie's *History and Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, as the title suggests, illuminated the history of traditional Chinese medicine. Ryan and Shattuck's *Treating AIDS with Chinese Medicine* was key in teaching me the basic concepts in traditional Chinese medicine such as *Qi*, Channels, and *Yin-Yang*. Yin's *Fundamentals of Traditional Chinese Medicine* explicated the idea of *bianzheng lunzhi*, and the techniques of diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine. Zhang and Cheng's *The Basic Theories of Traditional Chinese Medicine* clarified the principles of Zang and expounded on other tenets of traditional Chinese medicine. Finally, Tyler's *Understanding Alternative Medicine: New Health Paths in America* explained why Americans might desire traditional Chinese medicine, and elucidated several key differences between these two paradigms. This then led me to the next phase of my research, which was learning more about western medicine, and then comparing western medicine to traditional Chinese medicine.

Due to the fact that I wanted to include a comprehensive yet succinct and basic explanation of the key principles in western medicine, I again utilized Fondren Library's book catalog to gain this understanding. I was able to discover a couple of useful sources. Ryan and Shattuck provided several key distinctions between western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. Roth and Kobayashi's *Complementary and Alternative Medicine among Chinese Canadians* described four key assumptions in western biomedicine, and highlighted the dependence of western medicine on advanced technology. Hinrichs' *New Geographies of Chinese Medicine* gave even more comparisons between western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. However, I soon realized that book sources were not going to be enough for

the scope of my project. Fortunately, in Medical Communications, we attended a guest lecture led by Bob Sabin on the application of library resources in our research projects. Thanks to Mr. Sabin's detailed instructions, I was able to find a very pertinent article to my research titled *Philosophic Perspective: A Comparative Study of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine*. It was located on the Fondren website under Articles and Databases, subtopic natural sciences. I then narrowed my search to the field of medicine, and found this extremely helpful article on Medline. This article provided a major jumping off point for my thesis, as I could now successfully compare and contrast traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine.

The next step of my research project was finding examples of the successful integration of traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine in China, as a model of what the effective fusion of two medical paradigms might look like in America. For example, Ryan and Shattuck gave evidence that traditional Chinese medicine was already successfully exported to Europe and Africa, its use ever increasing. Another source I found on the book catalog was Ma and Henderson's *Rethinking Ethnicity and Health Care*, which described in detail the integration of traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine at various levels of the health care system in China. Essential to the success of this part of my research project was the use of Academic Search Complete. Through the use of this powerful search engine, I was able to find specific cases that showed the integration of traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine in China. For example, Zhang's article "Switching between traditional Chinese medicine and Viagra" illustrated perfectly the elasticity and flexibility of China's health care system in that patients could choose whether to follow western or traditional methods of care. Furthermore, Simpson's article "Family beliefs about diet and traditional Chinese medicine for Hong Kong women with

breast cancer” demonstrated that even in a westernized society like Hong Kong, traditional Chinese medicine was also an ingrained part of life.

Finally, I wanted to explore the other advantages that America would attain as a result of integrating traditional Chinese medicine. For example, Sivin’s *Science, Medicine, and Technology in East Asia* pointed out the fact that huge economic savings could be achieved after integration, as treatment methods in traditional Chinese medicine are very inexpensive compared to western pharmaceuticals. Furthermore, Ho and Lisowski’s *Concepts of Chinese Science and Traditional Healing Arts* highlighted the fact that traditional Chinese medicine can be more efficacious than western medicine in chronic diseases, and the maximum benefit could be yielded if traditional Chinese medicine were combined with western medicine to treat chronic conditions such as cancer, chronic bronchitis, and heart disease. Utilizing Fondren resources that led me to Medline, I found other articles that emphasized specific advantages to the integration of traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine. For example, Hui emphasized the fact that there is an increasing demand for traditional medicine in the U.S., and even managed care insurers are offering benefits for using traditional medicine.

Through the gathering and interpretation of resources, I was able to reach the conclusion that America should integrate traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine. This integration would benefit not only patients in America, but also the health care system in general, as integration is cost-effective, helps in chronic diseases, and meets an increasing demand for medical pluralism. Fondren Library was indispensable for its stores of information, and many thanks go to Bob Sabin, without whom the navigation of articles and databases would have been tricky to say the least. Without Fondren Library, I would not have been able to undertake this research project, and I am very grateful to have learned more about the use of library resources.