

Practicing Traditional Chinese medicine in New Zealand: The views and experiences of Auckland-based TCM practitioners

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Background

- ❖ There has been a Worldwide increase in the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)
- ❖ Acupuncture is one of the most recognised and utilised CAM treatments
- ❖ Acupuncture is the most utilised form of TCM treatment in New Zealand for non-Chinese individuals



Background

- ❖ New Zealand has experienced an increase in the utilisation of TCM-based acupuncture
- ❖ New Zealand has also experienced an increase in the number of individuals graduating with a formal degree specialising in either acupuncture or Chinese herbal medicine



Background

- ❖ Limited information exists that has focused on the practice of TCM in New Zealand
- ❖ Information is required that focuses on the actual practice of TCM in New Zealand
- ❖ Information relating to the conditions for which TCM treatment is sought
- ❖ Patient demographic information
- ❖ This information can be used for future healthcare planning



The study

❖ We designed a qualitative study that was designed to examine TCM practitioners experiences of TCM practice in New Zealand, and to also identify differences associated with being a TCM practitioner in New Zealand compared to China



Study Aims

- ❖ To identify differences associated with being a TCM practitioner in New Zealand compared to China





Methods

Participants: Ten TCM practitioners (eight female and two male) from the Auckland region of New Zealand



Methods

Participants:

- ❖ Aged between 32 and 52 years of age (Mean age = 44.7 years, standard deviation = 10.4 years)



Methods

Participants:

- ❖ Participants had been practicing TCM in New Zealand between 1 and 27 years (mean =10.9 years, standard deviation =10.3 years)



Methods

Participants:

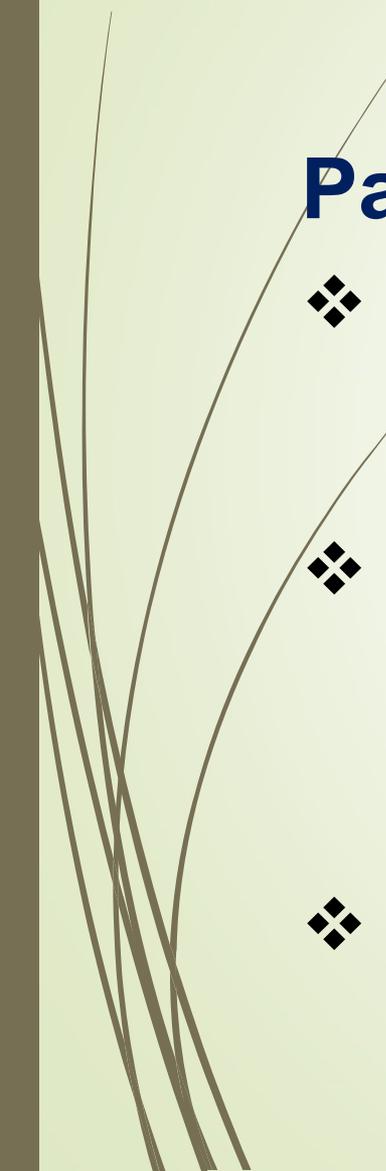
- ❖ Participants had been practicing TCM in China between 2 and 19 years (Mean = 8.0 years, standard deviation = 5.8 years)





Methods

Participants:

- ❖ Eight participants were Chinese and were born in China
 - ❖ One participant was New Zealand European and was born in New Zealand
 - ❖ One participant was Middle Eastern and was born in the Middle East
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Methods

Participants:

- ❖ The two non-Chinese participants both held Western medicine degrees in addition to their TCM qualifications
- ❖ All participants completed their TCM qualifications in China



Methods

Participants:

- ❖ Four participants were full-time teaching staff at New Zealand College of Chinese medicine (NZCCM)
- ❖ Five participants were part-time teaching staff and clinical supervisors at NZCCM and also had their own private practices



Methods

Participants:

- ❖ One participant was a former staff member who worked full-time as a combined general practitioner and TCM practitioner in their own practice



Methods

- ❖ **Measure:** Structured interview (questionnaire) schedule
- ❖ **Procedure:** Single Individual interviews that were audiotaped for later transcription
- ❖ **Data analysis:** Inductive thematic approach



Results

Data were examined under two main topic areas:

1. Differences associated between practicing TCM in New Zealand compared to China
2. Whether TCM was a first or alternative treatment option for individuals in New Zealand



Results

Differences associated with being a TCM practitioner in New Zealand compared to China:

- ❖ Five main themes emerged within this topic area



Results

Theme: Differences in job description

Quotes:

“In China we are doctors and we can also prescribe certain types of Western medicine drug treatment. But in New Zealand we can only practice TCM, we cannot prescribe Western medicine.”



Results

Theme: Pain management versus internal conditions

Quotes:

“In China we can treat stroke patients and patients with other neurological disorders. Here in New Zealand, most patients are ACC patients. They come for pain related problems. Like neck pain and shoulder pain, lower back pain and ankle pain. It’s more of a focus on the skeletal muscular system.”



Results

Theme: Ethnic diversity for TCM treatment in New Zealand

Quotes:

“In New Zealand, I’m treating Asians, Europeans, Maori and Pacific Islanders.”

“I see Asian, Samoan, and other Pacific Island patients. I also have Eastern European patients. Dutch patients, British patients and Australian patients.”



Results

Theme: Age differences between the two countries

Quotes:

“In China you have children as patients.”

“Here, I have treated Chinese children, but I have not treated European children.”



Results

Theme: Gender similarities across both countries

Quotes:

“Gender is similar to China; more females than males coming to the clinic.”

“I think it’s very similar; more females.”



Results

Topic: TCM as a first or alternative treatment option for individuals in New Zealand

- ❖ Three main themes emerged within this topic area



Results

Theme: TCM knowledge

Quotes:

“In China, Chinese medicine is very popular. So you don’t need to give an explanation. But here (in New Zealand) the TCM philosophy is quite unusual for Europeans.”





Results

Theme: TCM as an alternative treatment choice in New Zealand

Quotes:

“For Kiwi people, maybe a second choice, but for Asian people, a first choice. I think for Chinese people, because they know Chinese medicine well, if they have any pain related problem, going to the acupuncturist will be their first option. But for Kiwi people many will be referred to an acupuncturist.”



Results

Theme: Acceptance of acupuncture

Quotes:

“In New Zealand, most practitioners and patients will focus on acupuncture, unlike in China where we focus on Chinese herbal treatment first.”

“In New Zealand, once a patient has been treated with acupuncture, the next time the patient has a similar problem they may think about acupuncture as their first choice of treatment.”

Conclusions

- ❖ TCM practitioners are viewed as alternative healthcare practitioners in New Zealand
- ❖ TCM practitioners mostly work in their own private practice or as an employee in a TCM-based clinic
- ❖ TCM practitioners in New Zealand cannot prescribe Western drug treatment



Conclusions

- ❖ TCM is used as a form of alternative healthcare treatment in New Zealand for non-Chinese individuals. In most cases, an individual will see a general practitioner first
- ❖ In New Zealand, acupuncture appears to be the most utilised form of TCM treatment for non-Chinese individuals



Conclusions

- ❖ In New Zealand, acupuncture is mostly used for pain management purposes
- ❖ Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) fund acupuncture for injury-related conditions
- ❖ ACC is publicly funded through the use of certain levies



Conclusions

- ❖ TCM treatment was utilised by individuals from a number of different ethnic groups, reflecting the ethnic diversity of the current New Zealand population

