Sports Medicine in China

Sports medicine has benefited

Chinese athletes for more than five decades and contributed to China’s achievements in national, regional, and international events. The Chinese Association of Sports Medicine and the newly formed Chinese Association of Clinical Sports Medicine have played major roles in clinical and sports science research and education, general public health, and athletic training and performance in China.

In 2006, the Twenty-ninth FIMS International Conference of Sports Medicine was held in Beijing, with representatives from the World Health Organization and the International Olympic Committee in attendance. The use of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of sports injuries is of considerable interest to sports therapists, who are today making use of a much wider variety of methods to help athletes in their training, recovery from illness, and even in psychological preparation for competition.

Development of Sports Medicine Education and Research

In 1953 the Central Institute of Physical Education, now Beijing Sports University, offered courses in anatomy and physiology for the first time in China; later other courses, such as hygiene, sports medical indurance, and exercise therapy were developed. Five years later, the National Research Institute of Sports Science was established by the Ministry of Sports. This institute includes sports medicine, exercise physiology, and biochemistry research departments. In the same year, a sports hospital affiliated with Chengdu Institute of Physical Education, in Chengdu, a major city in Sichuan Province in southwestern China, was set up under the leadership of Marshal HE Long 贺龙 who was the Minister of Sport at that time. It was the first sports hospital in China and has become well known for its treatment of sports trauma by traditional Chinese medicine, such as the application of Chinese herbs, traditional osteopathy, and acupuncture.

This sports hospital, known since 1984 as Chengdu Sports Trauma Institute of National Sports Council, has cooperated with national sports teams and has provided Chinese Olympic athletes with services in both research and clinical treatment. Physicians apply traditional Chinese and modern Western medicine in their practice and have been successful in the treatment of acute and chronic sports traumas, especially in fractures and soft tissue and joint injuries.

In 1959, with the support of the Chinese National Sports Council, Beijing government, and Beijing Medical University, Professor QU Mianyu 曲绵域 established the Research Institute of Sports Medicine (now the Research Institute of Sports Medicine in China) and has become well known for its treatment of sports trauma by traditional Chinese medicine, such as the application of Chinese herbs, traditional osteopathy, and acupuncture.

Chinese Sports Medicine

QIAN Jinhua, the general-secretary of the Chinese Association of Sports Medicine explains how the practice of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) affects the physical conditioning and treatment of athletes in China.

Athlete selection, bodily function evaluation, training, and preventing and controlling injury and sickness are all important components of the Chinese sports medicine system. In the last few years we have incorporated a good deal of theory, experience, and methodology from overseas, but we still use many elements of TCM. For instance, we treat chronic and acute soft-tissue damage with TCM massage as well as acupuncture and moxibustion [the burning of herbs on or near the skin to stimulate healing]. Doctors with Western medical training have become more popular with athletes for other types of problems, however. For instance, athletes are tired of using traditional Chinese herbal remedies; they prefer Western prescriptions.
Institute of Sports Medicine at Beijing University) in the Third Affiliated Clinical Hospital of Beijing Medical University. It was the first institute to combine scientific research and clinical treatment of sports medicine in China and has become a top-ranking institute for teaching, research, and clinical treatment by experts in sports traumatology, sports nutrition, sports medical indurance, and sports rehabilitation.

This institute also has been appointed by the National Sports Council and the Chinese Olympic Committee as a medical treatment center for Chinese Olympic athletes. It has contributed to the general health and performance of many Chinese sports stars and Olympic champions.

Since the 1960s most major physical education institutes and physical education department within universities have offered sports medicine courses. In 1981 the sports medicine programs at several medical universities and physical education institutes were upgraded to offer bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in sports medicine. In recent years the major in sports medicine has been developed or strengthened at other sports institutes and universities. Most of the sports medicine centers have their own clinics or are affiliated with the universities or hospitals. Chinese doctors and physicians now work in sports medicine all over the world.

In 1986 the Chinese National Sports Council set up the National Research Institute of Sports Medicine, including the China Doping Control Center and Sports Nutrition Center. The China Doping Control Center is the only authorized center for doping control in China. It is in charge of doping control in international and national sports games and the testing of the medicine, food, and nutritional products used by athletes. It is the only lab in Asia that has passed the examination of the World Anti-Doping Agency continually for nineteen years.

**Chinese Association of Sports Medicine**

The Chinese Association of Sports Medicine has contributed greatly to the popularization and application of sports medicine in China. In 1978 the association joined the International Federation of Sports Medicine (FIMS). In 2006 the Chinese Association of Clinical Sports Medicine was founded as a part of the Chinese Medical Association and approved by the Chinese Association of Science and Technology.
The international status of the Chinese Association of Sports Medicine has been greatly elevated in the past twenty years. Since it became a member of FIMS, Professor Qu Mianyu was elected as a vice president of FIMS in 1986 and served until 1994. In 1990 the association became a founding member of the Asian Federation of Sports Medicine (AFSM), and Professor Qu was its first chairman.

**Sports Medicine Associations and Publications**

In China many branches of the Chinese Association of Sports Medicine are located in provinces and cities. These branches connect scholars with sports medicine therapists and provide a way for them to share their studies and experiences of teaching, research, and clinical practice. Since 1980 the National Conference of Sports Medicine has been held annually. In addition, each branch of the Chinese Association of Sports Medicine, such as sports traumatology and exercise therapy, hold conferences twice or three times a year. The *Chinese Journal of Sports Medicine* (CJSM) was first published in 1982 and is now one of China's core science journals.

In 1985 the first Beijing International Conference of Sports Medicine was held. Twenty-one years later, in 2006, the Twenty-ninth FIMS International Conference of Sports Medicine was held in Beijing. It was the first FIMS congress held in China and brought sixteen hundred representatives from all over the world to Beijing during the preparations for the Olympic Games. Representatives of FIMS, the World Health Organization, International Olympic Committee, Chinese Department of Health, China's General Administration of Sport, and the Organizing Committee of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games attended.

Many training courses in sports medicine are held in China. These courses focus on the theory and practice of sports traumatology, sports nutrition, sports medical intendance, and exercise therapy. The course in the traditional Chinese medical treatment of sports injury—which has attracted sports therapists from all over the world—is especially popular.

Bao-Xing Chen and Garé Lecomte

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**Acupuncture**

Acupuncture is an ancient treatment technique still routinely used in traditional Chinese medicine and also in Western medicine. Techniques for making bamboo needles and for casting bronze needles developed during the Shang dynasty (1766–1267 BCE). During the Song dynasty (960–1267 CE), the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1126–1234 CE), and the Yuan dynasty (1267–1368 CE), acupuncture developed widely in China. However, during the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) the practice was banned from general use by decree because it was perceived as unsuitable for application to the emperor. Although banned, acupuncture continued to flourish in local use. Although acupuncture had been popular among the Chinese-American community for over one hundred years, non-Chinese Americans became more aware of acupuncture after President Richard Nixon’s 1972 visit to China. In China acupuncture is used to treat diseases in nearly every branch of medicine, whether it is cardiology or dentistry, infectious diseases, or obstetrics. Responding to research, acupuncture techniques have embraced such new technologies as laser and electrical stimulation. In Chinese hospitals that provide acupuncture services, the acupuncture section is always called the department of acupuncture and moxibustion (moxibustion is the burning of medicinal substances, usually herbs, on the acupoints for therapeutic effect). Although the predominant treatment in the department is acupuncture, moxibustion plays an important role. Even as Western medicine becomes more common in China in the twenty-first century, acupuncture continues to be used, especially in hospitals that rely on traditional medicine and also those that combine traditional and Western approaches.

Guo Hong

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