Chinese Medicine Courses on the Internet

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ABSTRACT

Twelve websites are introduced that are the courses on Chinese medicine included in Jing Pin Kecheng (launched by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China). The websites provide free, searchable and peer-reviewed course materials on Chinese medicine. Anyone who is interested in Chinese medicine should not ignore these website resources.

INTRODUCTION

As alternative and complementary approaches come to play an increasingly important role in preventing and treating diseases, many people would like to know more, but who will teach them? It takes many years of study to become an accredited practitioner of Chinese Medicine; the idea of an autodidact mastering this complex field is very challenging. Nevertheless, the emergence of the Internet has made this idea more feasible. Anyone can look for information about Chinese Medicine via search engines such as Google and Yahoo, but useful and reliable online resources are hard to find. Among the vast number of hits returned by search engines, there is no way amateurs can distinguish between important and junk information, unless with a little help from the authorities.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China launched an initiative entitled Jing Pin Kecheng (China’s Higher Education Classic Course or China’s Quality OpencourseWare, (visit: http://166.111.180.5/new). To promote high-quality university-level online education, the Ministry of Education makes a certain number of courses available through Jing Pin Kecheng (JPKC) every year. Free, searchable access to course materials is made available to educators, students, and those pursuing independent study around the world. Of course, these courses are not credit-bearing. (It should be noted that all JPKC courses are taught in Chinese; Mandarin is the spoken teaching medium in provided videos.) This paper briefly introduces the courses on Chinese Medicine included in JPKC.

Among the courses that have been launched to date, 3 were selected in 2003, 4 in 2004, and 5 in 2005. Since the selection process is extremely rigorous and the number of courses taught in China is terrifically large, it is a great honor to be chosen. In fact, many universities invest considerable effort in preparing their submissions. In addition, some provinces and cities, such as Heilongjiang, Hunan, Beijing, and Shanghai, have launched their own JPKC initiatives (visit: http://166.111.180.5/new/test/test.asp). In order to have their courses listed, universities have carefully designed their courses, utilizing multimedia teaching tools, and opening up their Web sites for public access. For example, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine has put 6 of the courses submitted to JPKC online. It is anticipated that an increasing number of courses will be available online.

The JPKC would have been impossible without Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT’s) OpencourseWare. According to the description on an MIT website (http://ocw.mit.edu/index.html), the university makes its faculty’s core teaching materials available to anyone, anywhere in the world with access to the Internet. The Chinese educational sites go even further than MIT’s, offering multimedia materials such as PPT files, videos, and photographs. And, of course, JPKC courses come from many universities, not just one.

All of the Chinese Medicine courses presented via JPKC are taught by a group of teachers. The review process guarantees that content is reliable and comprehensive. Without a doubt, these websites provide the best way to study Chinese medicine for free. An annotated list of the courses available follows.
BEIJING UNIVERSITY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Visit: http://jpkc bjucmp edu cn/zhongyizhenduan/05 1.13/1.htm

Purposes: This course is designed (1) to help users learn basic concepts in Chinese diagnostics such as diagnosis, symptoms, patterns, illnesses, pattern identifications, and illness identifications, and illness case studies. (2) To familiarize users with the fundamental theories in Chinese diagnostics and principal contents. (3) To make users understand the development of Chinese diagnostics.

Contents: (1) Introduction. (2) Curriculum vitae for each lecturer, 10 in all. (3) Course outline. Contents include 4 examinations, Eight-Principle pattern identification and composition of case studies. (4) Teaching materials, including detailed contents, online discussion, self-test, index of terms, selected texts from ancient medical classics, site map, and point-by-point guide to diagnosis. (5) Case study. (6) Teaching notes, with PowerPoint presentation prepared by Professor Luo Hegu. (7) Teaching notes, with PowerPoint presentation prepared by Professor Yeung Ngailing. (8) Teaching video. (9) Self-test. (10) List of contents (same as number 4). (11) Photos. Providing pictures of visual examination and tongue examination. (12) References and (13) Comments from experts and students, teaching video, certificates, teaching aids, and photos. Also included are keyword search, latest research achievement, and selected theses.

Comments: This site is very user-friendly. The videos are very easily viewed online.

Chinese Traditional Medicine (2004)
Visit: http://jpkc bjucmp edu cn/zhongyaoxue/main.htm

Purposes: This course is designed to introduce Chinese medical theories and clinical uses.

Contents: (1) Learning section, for both teachers and those studying independently. Provides 28 chapters on pharmaceutical history, theory, and application. In Chapters 8–28, different kinds of drugs are introduced, including those appropriate for relieving outward symptoms, heat-clearing drugs, purgative drugs, etcetera. (2) Training section. Lists drugs and their properties and applications. (3) Testing section. Offers multiple-choice and short-essay tests. The site also has an electronic notebook, a user’s guide, a bulletin board (for registered students only), a help section, and an index of drugs.

Comments: This highly recommended site provides access to a very rich collection of pictures and descriptions of the drugs used in Chinese medicine. The one complaint is that the website’s icons are confusing.

HEILONGJIANG UNIVERSITY OF CHINESE MEDICINE

Herbal Prescription (2003)
Visit: www hljucm net/web_cai guojia/fjx/index.htm

Purposes: (1) To define the status and importance of formulas in Chinese medicine. (2) To help users learn the principles in the configuration and usage variations of formulas, and effects on the indications, and to understand basic concepts such as forms of formula, application methods, and the correlation between formulas and treatments. (3) To introduce the formation, use, functions, and indications of 200 formulas.

Visit: www hljucm net/web_cai guojia/zyhx/index.htm

Purposes: (1) To make users understand the mission and scope of chemistry of Chinese medicine and its status in the field. (2) to make users understand the functions of chemistry of Chinese Medicine in the modernization and industrialization of Chinese Medicine and (3) To make users understand the prospect of Chinese medicine research, its research methods, and the development trend in the future.

Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber (2005)
Visit: www hljucm net/web_cai/0507jgyl.htm

Purposes: (1) to let users grasp the academic achievement and contribution of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber. (2) To familiarize users with the basic contents and composition style of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber. (3) To introduce the nature of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber, its history and development, and its major commentators.

Authentication of Chinese Medicines (2005)
Visit: www hljucm net/web_cai/zyjd/index.htm

Purposes: (1) to introduce 233 commonly used Chinese herbs. (2) to explain the methods of using discrimination and quality judgment about Chinese medications, and to execute regulations in Chinese medicine compendiums; to make users understand the latest technology and methods in using discrimination about Chinese medications, and (3) to encourage initiative in inheriting the medical heritage of the motherland, in sorting and discovering species of Chinese medications, and in developing research on Chinese medications.

Contents: These four courses share a single organizational structure: (1) Introduction. (2) Description of textbook. (3) Syllabus. (4) Overview of course. (5) Assignments. (6) References. (7) Three teaching videos (each about 1 hour in length). (8) Examination paper. (9) Analysis of examination papers. The Authentica-
tion of Chinese Medicines site also offers space for students’ comments.

Comments: These four websites are easy to use but the course materials are saved as Microsoft Word files, meaning some may find them hard to open. It is also unfortunate that the full text of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber does not appear as part of the site.

NANJING UNIVERSITY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Wen-Bing (2003)

Purposes: Helps students to understand the principal theories, basic knowledge, and fundamental treatment of Warm Diseases.


Comments: This website is very well organized and informative, but scanned photos are “foggy” and files that are said to be downloadable files do not download.


Purposes: (1) To introduce basic theories and basic knowledge in Chinese pediatrics. (2) To introduce basic functional skills of clinical pediatrics. (3) To provide a systematic knowledge of child growth, physical pathology, hygiene and prevention, and disease treatment. (4) To make it possible for students to understand children and pediatrics in terms of Chinese medicine, and to deal with commonly seen clinical pediatrics problems through identifying patterns and determining treatment.


Comments: This website is very well organized and informative, but scanned photos are “foggy” and files that are said to be downloadable files do not download.

SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Acupuncture (2004)
Visit: http://www.acumox.org/zj_demo/

Purposes: To teach users basic theories, fundamental knowledge, and basic skills of acupuncture upon the acquisition of basic theories of Chinese medicine and to learn skills in manipulating acupunctural treatment on common diseases and frequently occurring diseases.

Contents: (1) Introduction. (2) Course contents, including meridian theory, acupuncture and moxibustion, disease treatment, experimental acupuncture and moxibustion, selections from acupunctural classics, and acupunctural canons. (3) Course online. (4) Lectures. (5) Help section (for registered students only). (6) Links. (7) Course guide. (8) Test. (9) Downloadable tools.

Comments: The course provides many verbal and pictorial illustrations, making it very practical. This website is beautiful but very slow compared with the others mentioned in this paper. It is very obvious that the course emphasizes the ancient acupunctural canons.

Experimental Traditional Chinese Medicine (2005)
Visit: http://jpkc.shutcm.edu.cn/syzyx/

Purposes: (1) Integrating Chinese medicine and Western medicine with modern research methods. (2) Individually explores subject matters, subject designs, research preparation, experiment implementation, analysis of experiment data, writing experiment reports, etcetera.

Contents: (1) Introduction. This includes comments from lecturers, experts, and students. (2) Teaching outline. (3) Teaching contents (saved as Microsoft Word file). (4) Test. (5) Experimental guide. (6) References. (7) Teaching videos. (8) Teaching contents (saved as PowerPoint file). (9) Student comments.

Comments: This website is easy to use but it is very slow compared with other sites mentioned in this paper.

GUANGZHOU UNIVERSITY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Traditional Chinese Gynecology (2005)
Visit: http://210.38.96.15:8080/guojia/index.htm

Purposes: (1) To introduce the definition of Chinese gynecology. (2) To make users understand the scope of research in Chinese gynecology. (3) To familiarize users with the characteristics of Chinese gynecology.


Comments: The website is well designed and easy to use. Placing teaching videos and PowerPoint presentations on the same page is particularly helpful.

LIAONING UNIVERSITY FOR TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine (2005)
Visit: http://jp.lnutcm.edu.cn/zhongji/

Purpose: Teaches students to know basic theories, concepts, and knowledge of Chinese medicine, both philosophically and scientifically.


Comments: Downloading is unstable and links are often unavailable. The author cannot offer more comments.

CONCLUSIONS

As this summary suggests, the online educational materials available to students of Chinese medicine are rich indeed, though there is quite a lot of material that is repeated. All of the courses provide excellent, peer-reviewed material, and many of them make good use of slideshows and video in presenting. An increasing number of courses, with multimedia tools, will become available on the Internet, although for now those on JPKC provide a very fine beginning. However, it should be noted that practical components and clinical experience cannot be provided via online courses.

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