

Letters to the Editor

I would like to comment on the article titled 'Does Chinese Medicine Consultation Share Features and Effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy? Using Traditional Acupuncture as an Example', which appeared in Volume 8, Issue 2. This article compares the Chinese Medicine consultation process with CBT. It discusses the similarities and differences of both and the specific and non specific features that induce behavioural change in the patient.

I agree with the authors regarding the similarities of the TCM consultation process and CBT. Both processes allow the patient to slow down, gather and express their thoughts. The TCM consultation process also allows the patient to connect their thoughts to their bodily aches, pains and functions.

I believe the consultation process does a number of things.

1. Allowing the patient to talk uninterrupted provides the clinician with an insight into the thought processes of the patient – what it is that is important to them.

If handled well, this free talk can be gently guided to provide the clinician with the majority of information needed regarding the presenting condition and the overall state of mind of the patient. Of course follow up questions will fill in any gaps.

2. The consultation process also provides the patient with a sense that someone is listening to them. This I feel is import, not just for building a rapport with the patient, but also is the first step in the healing process.

3. Also by going back over key signs and symptoms and asking clarifying questions, you are telling the patient that you have listened and are interested in not just the presenting condition, but also their entire person.

In some ways our fast paced modern lifestyle has lost some of its connectedness – when catching up with friends and family moves to a finely tuned schedule and the art of face to face conversation has declined.

The consultation process is a way for people to slow down, air their thoughts and allow the clinician to gain a deeper insight into the emotional links to their presenting condition to provide a holistic, effective treatment, allowing the patient to be the centre of that treatment, thus increasing compliance.

The consultation process is a way for the patient to regain some connectedness with themselves and the clinician is the facilitator of this process.

This, I believe, is the essence of CBT.

*Dr Tracey Byrne
Melbourne*

I enjoyed reading 'Does Chinese Medicine Consultation Share Features and Effects of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy? Using Traditional Acupuncture as an Example' in the last issue. I found it was informative and enlightening for me to think about the Chinese medicine consultation from this new perspective.

As a recent graduate, I am always interested in any aspects of practising Chinese medicine that may be associated with better outcomes. There is already so much to think about with acupuncture and herbs that I had never considered this key component of our standard treatment package, except for in the general sense that a medical consultation can be therapeutic.

We devote a lot of time to trying to distinguish the specific from the non specific effects of other aspects of Chinese medicine, and I agree that we should also consider the specific effects of the Chinese medicine consultation. I can now appreciate that our consultations are potentially more than just data collection and may have specific psychological benefits for the patient.

*Anna Hyde
Thornbury, Victoria*