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Establishment of the “Four Specializations” TCM Nursing Outpatient System and the Characteristic Nursing Connotation of the TCM Pediatric Nursing Outpatient Clinic in Our Hospital

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Abstract

Our hospital leverages the synergistic integration of clinical nursing, teaching, and research capabilities through the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) nursing clinic to continuously enhance clinical nursing quality, thereby achieving Professor Feng Yunhua’s guiding objective of transforming nursing practice from “experience-based to science-based” development. We have established a vertically integrated operational framework of “Four Specializations” for the TCM nursing clinic. Furthermore, we have instituted a TCM pediatric nursing clinic, grounded in pediatric constitution theory to cultivate distinctive features of syndrome differentiation and nursing care, while refining psychosomatic nursing protocols within a holistic nursing perspective. Building upon the foundation of high-quality nursing service delivery, we continue to explore viable pathways for the informatization management development of TCM nursing clinics.

Full Text

The Establishment of a “Four Specializations” Traditional Chinese Medicine Nursing Outpatient System and the Characteristic Nursing Connotation of Our Hospital’s TCM Pediatric Nursing Clinic

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Abstract

Our hospital leverages the integrative advantages of the TCM nursing outpatient clinic to consolidate clinical nursing, teaching, and research capabilities, continuously improving the quality of clinical nursing work to realize Professor Feng Yunhua’s guiding objective of transforming nursing practice “from empirical to evidence-based.” We have established a vertically integrated work system for the “Four Specializations” TCM nursing outpatient clinic: specialized departments, specialized procedures, specialized diseases, and specialized symptoms. The addition of a TCM pediatric nursing clinic, rooted in constitutional theory, has enabled the development of dialectical nursing characteristics and the refinement of emotional nursing protocols within the holistic nursing framework. Building upon the foundation of high-quality nursing services, we continue to explore viable pathways for the information-based management and development of TCM nursing outpatient clinics.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese medicine nursing; Nursing clinic; TCM suitable nursing technology; Constitutional nursing; Emotional nursing

The development of TCM nursing outpatient clinics and the construction of a “Four Specializations” system—encompassing specialized departments, specialized procedures, specialized diseases, and specialized symptoms—represent important objectives proposed in Beijing’s 13th Five-Year Plan for TCM Nursing Development. Since the plan’s inception, our hospital’s Nursing Department has actively participated in its implementation, fully engaging in Beijing’s new TCM nursing health service system of “two demonstrations, two flagships, and three centers” [1]. In 2017, we established Beijing’s first TCM nursing outpatient clinic.

In 2022, our hospital’s TCM Breast Care Nursing Clinic was recognized as a Beijing Municipal Demonstration Nursing Clinic, with team members repeatedly receiving honors such as Beijing’s “Top Ten TCM Nursing Achievements” and TCM Nursing Role Model awards. In November 2023, our pediatrics department was selected for Beijing’s second batch of TCM nursing outpatient clinic construction projects. By October 2024, we had provided over 50,000 treatment sessions of ten TCM suitable technologies—including cupping therapy, moxibustion, and acupoint massage—to outpatient pediatric patients, earning widespread trust from parents due to significant therapeutic effects. Since its establishment, our nursing clinic team has successfully implemented a mature work system across two specialized nursing clinics, demonstrating broad benefits and long-term developmental advantages for outpatient experiences, clinical nursing, teaching, and research.

1. Establishment of the Vertically Integrated TCM Nursing Outpatient System

In the long-term planning of our TCM nursing outpatient clinic, we have systematically established a vertically integrated work system that progresses from technique to theory, from unified care for common diseases to dialectical nursing for specialized diseases, and then back to integrated holistic protocols that highlight specialized disease characteristics. This system comprises four key components: First, outpatient nurses must master fundamental techniques, thoroughly understand dialectical nursing protocols for specialized diseases, summarize technical experiences independently, and periodically complete TCM theoretical studies. Second, team-leading nurses must conduct statistical analysis of case data and nursing work, develop training materials, and regularly conduct in-house education sessions. Third, department directors must propose improvements and refinements to both routine and dialectical nursing protocols for specialized diseases based on TCM theory and clinical experience. Fourth, the Nursing Department and outpatient head nurses must develop TCM nursing routines, standardize operational protocols, and create holistic nursing plans that integrate specialized technical features with actual patient needs.

This system's establishment serves as the necessary prerequisite for the TCM nursing outpatient clinic to function as an independent, self-contained entity. During initial development, the TCM Breast Care Nursing Clinic fully leveraged its operational strengths, completed systematic categorization of suitable technologies, and implemented the TCM dialectical concept of "disease-syndrome integration" into specialized nursing protocols, accelerating the crucial transformation of our TCM nursing team "from empirical to evidence-based practice" [2]. With the successful launch of the TCM Pediatric Nursing Clinic in 2023, the team thoroughly investigated patient and family needs regarding outpatient service formats within the context of rapidly developing information networks. Building upon proven management experience and capitalizing on the advantages of younger, more tech-savvy parents of pediatric patients, we continue exploring viable approaches for integrating TCM nursing outpatient clinics with intelligent network management.

2.1 Constitution-Based Dialectical Nursing Techniques for Pediatric Patients

Pediatric constitution is characterized by "three excesses and four deficiencies" in both physiological and pathological aspects, exhibiting strong plasticity and bias tendencies. The combination of individual and fundamental constitutional types renders children's constitutions unstable and prone to change, increasing diagnostic difficulty [3]. Furthermore, during pediatric nursing procedures, nurses are often affected by young children's limited self-awareness and expressive abilities regarding their conditions, as well as parental over-anxiety, making it difficult to accurately capture disease information. This interferes with nursing protocol selection and implementation, reducing therapeutic effectiveness.

Constitutional nursing based on TCM constitutional theory can compensate for diagnostic shortcomings arising from communication barriers. Therefore, when refining nursing protocols, our clinic places greater emphasis on the organic integration of three key elements: constitution, disease, and syndrome. Building upon TCM dialectical principles, we reference pediatric constitutional identification systems to develop characteristic nursing protocols centered on common and special pediatric diseases.

In recent years, our department has focused on specialized disease development, establishing specialized clinics for pediatric emotional disorders such as tic disorders, ADHD, and sleep disturbances, as well as growth and development issues, allergic diseases, congenital torticollis, and infant health maintenance. Through physician-nurse collaboration, we emphasize TCM dialectical treatment, skillfully employ external treatment methods in pediatric chronic disease management, and advocate the advanced concept of “combining health cultivation with family participation.” In specialized nursing development, we prioritize techniques such as moxibustion, cupping therapy, acupoint application, and pediatric tuina massage, combined with family dietary care and emotional nursing to improve children’s constitutional biases, achieving the nursing objective of “prevention before disease onset” [4].

2.2 Emotional Nursing Responsive to Pediatric and Parental Psychological Needs

Emotional nursing within the holistic nursing framework for TCM pediatrics encompasses protocols that address both pediatric patients and their accompanying parents. Children possess pure temperaments and immature physical development, making them highly susceptible to environmental influences. Among the seven emotions, they most frequently express fear and fright, with excessive fright easily leading to illness [5]. During illness, children perceive pain and environmental changes more acutely than usual, yet their expressive abilities remain limited, often causing their emotional expressions to be overlooked by adults. Without timely comfort, children’s resistance and fear may intensify, preventing treatment cooperation and potentially triggering complications such as expiratory alkalosis, gastrointestinal discomfort, or seizures due to excessive crying. For accompanying parents, concerns about their child’s illness and negative emotions, anxiety about disrupted work and daily routines, and misunderstanding of treatment and nursing protocols also generate negative feelings. These not only adversely affect their own mental health but also interfere with the child’s recovery process.

Based on our pediatrics department’s specialized treatment features and implementation of TCM suitable technologies, our nursing clinic team has designed the following emotional nursing protocol: First, create a warm, child-friendly nursing atmosphere: Pediatric nurses wear candy-colored uniforms with cartoon patterns, waiting areas feature eco-friendly cartoon wall art, treatment rooms use warm lighting and soft furnishings, and educational toys are provided to cre-

ate an environment where children want to stay and explore, reducing tension and fear of unfamiliar, noisy settings [6]. Second, encourage children to develop positive, optimistic attitudes: Nurses should use gentle tones and positive vocabulary to encourage children, such as “What a lovely/handsome smile you have, sweetheart!” “You were so well-behaved while waiting—you’re a model child!” or “You comforted that crying child just now—you’re amazing!” [7][8] For situations requiring cooperation, such as when a child moves their limbs excessively, nurses might ask “Could you help me hold this toy?” or use “Let’s make a funny face!” to encourage mouth opening. Additionally, metaphorical language can help children understand illness normally, reducing disease-related fear and building treatment confidence. Third, in emotional nursing for parents, nurses must first demonstrate professional competence in nursing techniques, using professional yet accessible language to gain parental trust in nursing protocols. During treatment, nurses can briefly explain the child’s condition and precautions, introducing successful cases to alleviate parental tension, depression, and other negative emotions [9]. Fourth, regularly conduct free clinics and health education activities: Parental anxiety often stems from feeling helpless when caring for children at home, being unclear about home care methods, or lacking confidence in their caregiving abilities. During parental education sessions, we appropriately popularize TCM pediatric nursing knowledge, provide one or two home care tips, and increase parental involvement in the child’s nursing process.

2.3 Integration of Nursing, Teaching, and Research Resources

Centered on the specialized disease features of TCM pediatrics and fully utilizing the rich nursing cases from our outpatient clinic, we have achieved remarkable progress in practical teaching, continuing education, and research activities. Through summarizing and categorizing our department’s TCM suitable technologies, we have developed high-quality courses including “Safety Management of TCM Suitable Nursing Technologies,” “Pediatric Tuina Manipulation Demonstration,” “Pediatric Tuina/Moxibustion/Cupping Workshops,” “Thunder Fire Moxibustion for Rhinitis and Tuina for Cough,” and “Pediatric Cupping Therapy.” These courses provide specialized training for department members and advanced trainees, and have been presented at national-level continuing education programs such as the “Cross-Strait Evidence-Based Practice and Promotion of TCM Suitable Nursing Technologies Seminar” and the Beijing Municipal TCM Administration’s “Evidence-Based Practice and Promotion of TCM Suitable Nursing Technologies Seminar.”

As a Beijing Municipal Nursing Backbone Talent Training Base and a Clinical Practice Base for TCM Nursing Therapy Specialists of the Chinese Nursing Association, our team has trained nine national nursing backbone talents over the past year. We have also hosted advanced trainees from Beijing sister hospitals and multiple hospitals from other provinces, including Zhalant Banner Mongolian Medicine General Hospital, Fangshan Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital, Qian’an Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital, and Dongfeng Community

Hospital. Through these learning exchanges, we have effectively promoted our hospital's TCM nursing outpatient clinic characteristics and advantages nationwide.

In terms of research, we conduct specialized research activities based on the academic achievements of Professor Cui Xia's research team, the National Famous TCM Practitioner Professor Wang Sumei's inheritance workstation, and Professor Feng Yunhua's TCM nursing inheritance workstation, focusing on pediatric constitutional theory, Zhongjing nursing science, and holistic nursing concepts.

3. Exemplary Nursing Case Presentation

Effect Observation of Cupping Therapy in Nursing Care for a Child with Pneumonia in Convalescence—Guo Weiling

The patient was a 9-year-old male who presented at the TCM Pediatric Nursing Outpatient Clinic in January 2024 with a two-month history of cough. The parents reported that two months prior, the child developed cough and intermittent fever (maximum 38.1°C) after exposure to wind-cold. They administered “Motrin” (ibuprofen) for fever reduction, and the cough improved after three days. One month prior, after consuming cold drinks, the child developed fever again (maximum 37.9°C) with worsening cough. Antibiotic administration proved ineffective, prompting a visit to our pediatrics department. TCM diagnosis was pneumonia with wheezing (lung deficiency with lingering pathogen syndrome), while Western medicine diagnosed pneumonia in convalescence. After TCM herbal treatment, the cough significantly improved, CT showed absorption of pulmonary inflammation, and blood routine indicators normalized. The child presented to our nursing clinic today for further TCM conditioning.

Presenting symptoms: Occasional cough with white sputum, cough exacerbated by exercise, spontaneous sweating with minimal exertion, no fever, no nasal congestion. TCM examination revealed dark red tongue with thick greasy coating, fine and slippery pulse, clear consciousness, good spirits, no pharyngeal congestion, no tonsillar enlargement, no nasal mucosal edema, clear voice, mild rales in left lung, normal appetite and sleep, normal bowel movements and urination.

Constitutional differentiation: The child's habitual excessive sweating, palmar and plantar heat, thirst with preference for cold drinks aligned with the “internal heat constitution” category in the nine-classification pediatric constitutional system, characterized by yang excess and yin deficiency [10].

Holistic nursing assessment: The child exhibited ineffective respiratory patterns, indicating residual mild local respiratory infection; inadequate nutritional supplementation during illness with significant physical decline; parental anxiety due to lack of knowledge regarding pediatric pneumonia prevention and home care.

Based on this assessment, nursing objectives were established: (1) achieve complete infection control, maintain airway patency, and enable effective sputum

expectoration; (2) ensure adequate nutritional intake and physical recovery; (3) teach parents home care techniques such as “pediatric back percussion for sputum expectoration” and “dietary care during pediatric pneumonia convalescence.”

TCM suitable technology nursing intervention: Specially designed silicone “Miya” cups for children were applied to acupoints including Tianzhugu, bladder meridian on the back, pulmonary inflammation area, and from Tiantu to Tanzhong. Suction and moving cupping techniques were performed 5–10 times per area with gentle manipulation, stopping at light skin redness or minimal petechiae. Treatment was administered every other day.

Follow-up: After three moving cupping sessions combined with oral herbal medicine over one week, the child’s cough and sputum production improved significantly, with only occasional cough remaining and no other discomfort. Tongue presentation became pale red with thin white coating, pulse remained fine and slippery, and cardiopulmonary examination was normal. A second cupping treatment was administered, with cup marks changing from deep purple to light purple interspersed with red, gradually fading. Herbal medicine was continued for conditioning.

Nursing protocol evaluation: The moving cupping technique combines the advantages of both cupping and gua sha, stimulating yang qi throughout the body and activating the regulatory functions of viscera and meridians to achieve blood circulation, qi movement, and vital qi stimulation. The “sha spots” appearing during moving cupping represent subcutaneous hemorrhage from capillary rupture, through which pathogenic factors are expelled along with blood, achieving the therapeutic effect of “expelling pathogenic sha and releasing disease” [11][12]. When applied to children’s delicate skin, moving cupping causes minimal pain and is readily accepted by both parents and children, making it highly suitable for adjunctive treatment of pediatric conditions.

Our TCM nursing outpatient clinic work system has validated its unique advantages in specialized nursing, talent cultivation, clinical nursing education, and TCM nursing academic research through practical application. It not only meets the multi-level and diversified service demands of patients with specialized conditions for TCM nursing but also serves as an excellent channel for direct communication between outpatients and TCM characteristic non-pharmacological therapies, significantly enhancing confidence in and social recognition of TCM culture. To adapt to the highly informatized social development trend and meet family needs for “multi-functional, high-intelligence” self-service healthcare, our team will explore the participation format and improvement protocols for TCM nursing outpatient clinics within the “Internet + Healthcare” model. We aim to enrich and deepen TCM nursing health education and cultural promotion on online platforms, simplify online appointment procedures, effectively reduce time constraints on parents’ and children’s schedules, and enhance the overall healthcare experience [13].

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