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MEDICINAL ROOTS 相慧 MAGAZINE

Ancient Wisdom - Modern Healthcare



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Chinese Astrology Outlook Musings

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2023 Guǐ Mǎo 癸卯 Water Rabbit

Chinese Astrology Outlook Musings

by **Dr. Sonia F. Tan, DAOM, RAc,**
RTCMP, Certified Astrology and Feng Shui
Practitioner

Another year has infused into our lives with the Heavens trying to signal to us what we are meant to be doing and heading towards. This shortened article peeking into the year ahead, will be expanded in the coming weeks over various other platforms. I mentioned previously that the Tiger year is a bold year of change, positive change in the end, especially if Tiger has an interaction in your chart. If you have had a bold change, and you are still struggling to understand

the silver lining, I'm here to remind you it is there. It may appear later, and you will reflect on the year as one of instrumental change for the better. As with all actions, you must act with kindness and respect for the karma to come back around to help you.

This coming year of the Water Rabbit is a softer Yin approach versus the bold Yang energy of the Tiger.

However, I cannot say with confidence that this softer Yin year means it is all for the better. Let me clarify that. In fact, let's define what better means. Usually

that means an improvement. One's perspective of improvement is actually what matters. Thus, each and every year are opportunities for us to learn, grow and better ourselves.

The difference is that some years for individuals are for course-correction and learning and are not meant to be productive. They are seed planting. Other years are about abundance, output, creation, and movement.

Every year affects one's own life differently, based on your own individual Birth Chart, which is composed of four pillars, not just one animal pillar. As some of you may know, I usually hesitate to do these, because Chinese Astrology and your "fate" is determined by your entire chart—year, month, day, and time—that interacts with the year, and Feng Shui and human relationships. Providing an astrological annual outlook is pretty general and inaccurate. This creates a misunderstanding of Chinese Astrology, and consequently, its value and effectiveness. Why does Astrology matter (even just a bit)? Simplistically, chronobiology and circadian rhythms look at how time and light affect health.

Astrology is one of the Chinese metaphysical ways we look at the energy of time, light and other sensory phenomena, with how it affects our human health, energy cycles of nature and global health. We, as Chinese metaphysicians, also look at other tools such as Flying Star Feng Shui, Qi Men, Yi Jing, together with the Ba Zi. Despite the challenge of taking something complicated and trying to speak about it simply, I appreciate that people like to have a general idea, to be prepared, and to be provided with context and understanding of one's path. So, while I will give a general synopsis, keep in mind, again, your personal path may be different, depending on your "energetic DNA", or your complete Ba Zi Birth Chart. Globally, my perspective on the general 2023 Water Rabbit trends will be based mostly on both the Ba Zi and Flying Star Feng Shui. Let's dig in!

The upcoming year looks subtly dramatic. Sounds like a conflict, right? Wait for it.

On January 22, 2023, the Lunar start date for the year of the Guǐ Mǎo 癸卯 Water Rabbit begins, with the official Astrological Solar start date beginning on February 4, 2023, at 10:43. This year of the (Yin) Water Rabbit will be one of creativity, play, hidden agendas and movements, knowledge, senses, emotion and intuition, growth, follow through, and assessing tolerance and boundaries. The Rabbit is the second animal and stage in the Wood and Spring season. Many attribute the Rabbit to be the



PHOTO: Mekht for Unsplash.com

fourth animal sign, which is true if you follow a clock pattern. However, when you align it with the cycle of the Sun and the seasons, the Rabbit is the second animal in the Earthly Branches and the Wood/Spring season of growth. It is also a pure Yin Wood energy. This means it is solely about sprouting, moving forward, creating, and surviving. We are continuing our trajectory that began last year of a new life, a new era, a new way of living, that will leap into a new stage again in 2024.

Here in the Water Rabbit year, we finish what we began in the Water Tiger year and move on. There may be many back and forth swings, until finally, a decisive and quick action is made, without looking back.

Rabbit Mǎo 卯 is one of those animal signs that I call a “quick and elusive implementer”. As mentioned, it is a pure Yin Wood energy, without any other energy within it. This usually means it is a more volatile energy, with no other elements of tolerance

and adjustments. It’s one of the all-or-nothing signs with it being pure Wood, and Yin Wood. Generally, Wood element people, at their core, exist as compassionate and benevolent people, movers, and doers, intelligent and strong, quick to get things done, yet also can also be impatient, temperamental, and intensely angry. The Rabbit at its core, because it is Yin Wood, moves through life striving to cultivate skills and growth for prosperity, survival, and vitality. Specifically, the Yin Wood in the Rabbit is like a grass or vine. Grasses bend in the wind and vines contort to get around an impediment. Thus, Rabbits and Yin Wood selves are known to be great survivors, as they can often find a way to curve or bend around an obstacle to keep growing and stay alive.

Rabbits also are a directional animal and something we call a “Peach Blossom” Táo Huā 桃花 animal sign.

This means they are extra popular. It’s easy for them to attract people in their life. Sometimes this is called the “Romance star/animal”. Charms, romance, sexuality, emotions, and hidden sides come to light when this sign occurs. This does not mean all people are good for them nor does it always mean romance (it depends on your individual chart). One of the challenges of those who have two or more directional/Peach Blossom animals in their chart is to understand how to establish boundaries for themselves. To be clearer, I mean, how to decide who to have in your life or not. Who is good for you or not. With this year being a Peach Blossom year, this means we can expect this “popularity” energy. It can feel dramatic if this interacts with your Birth Chart—ins and outs, ups and downs, like a swinging door. Thus, the World may also feel this drama, shake-ups in relationships, until it figures out what is good for it/that country/person, etc. This is one part of the “subtly dramatic” theme of this year.



The second part of my “subtly dramatic” year is what we have to walk through this year. We look above to the Heavens, Planets, Universe cycle of Qi, represented by the Heavenly Stems. This year is Yin Water coming from the Heavens. On a good note, we have Water and Wood again which are harmonious elements, with Water nurturing Wood. As Wood develops further in the year, it will sedate the Water. However, let’s also remember Water’s strengths that reign this year: Water represents intuition, emotions, senses, ideas, and flexibility. Yin Water specifically is a symbol of the clouds or rain, formless, shapeless therefore flexible and always flowing with one’s senses or mood and often changing directions. Water’s shapeless form means it can always figure out how to get around or through things.

*You cannot put a door
in front of Water—it will
find the cracks to flow
through. With Yin Water,
its droplets will subtly make
it to the other side, almost
unnoticeable until it is there.*

With Yin Water being also a sensory and emotional element more so than Yang Water, we may feel waves of moods and emotions, up and down. This is meant for you to ask yourself to look inward, tap into your senses and intuition this year. Ascertain

and listen to what the wise mind is telling you about yourself and how to move forward. Yin Water is subtle and gives hints, sensory hints, intuitive hints. You need to pay attention to what your gut is telling you. Pay attention to the little signs that may show up. Be aware of what your intuition is telling you. Your sensory self is there to help you tap into your inner knowing to guide you to the next steps. This year is a continuation of previous years of implementing the new you and new life you have envisioned for yourself, but you still need to listen and feel. It’s not a year to logically think it out. That was the digging up, throwing out and seed planning and planting stage we’ve been through for the past few years. Now it is a year of growing that seedling. It is a year to tap into what feels like it harmonizes with you, the sense of who you are where you want to go, and flow with that as you gently move forward. Hopefully, you’ve also listened to my past advice where, in order for new energy to thrive, we must have already made room and let go, and must have also been respectful.

Yin Water from the heavens is different from the Earthly Branch Yin Water. The Heavenly Stem Yin Water is the purest form of Yin, and ultimately, as in natural law, wants to transform to Yang and Fire. This occurs with certain other characters in place, but ultimately means that Yin Water actually has more of a dryness affinity. Coupled with the Yin Wood of Rabbit, which is also inherently dry, we are looking at a dry year. Mǎo 卯 also has an affinity to the Yangming channels. Thus, we may see a dry year, with more fires and heat-related disasters globally.



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In Chinese medicine we may see Fire and dryness problems especially in the Yangming channels, on top of the Water and Wood problems if a person's helpful elements are damaged by this.

With the coupling of Yin Water from the Heavens above and the Yin Wood of the Mǎo 卯 Rabbit, we have a subtly sensitive and contorting year as we move along in our new era of life. Globally, this may mean dramatic swings and subtle aggressions, but also soft, kind words that transform change, and quick action. Financially, metal is not present, so the economy will struggle, and may see a further hit in the late summer and early fall. In the second and third quarter of the year things will feel like the friction pushes the love-hate relations enough to sever ties and move on. The last quarter's intention is to see our visions restabilize and return to growth. It's not a bold in-your-face year like the Tiger, however it is a lot of nudging and passive-aggressive friction, meant

to move and transform as one taps into the intuitive and sensitive side, the World included. At times it may feel like an impatient year, but it is meant for us to dip a little deeper into our subconsciousness to move us toward positive change and the new Age of Light coming in 2024. In the coming few weeks, I'll be writing about some specific animals that are more highly affected this year, so look for those. For now, I'll leave you with this musing: now is the time to hone your intuition and gut, to continue to follow through on your new visions that you have been growing, especially if the elements of Wood and Water are your beneficial elements of your Birth Chart. Harness the sensory and survival power of the Water Rabbit to help implement your visions, growth, and abundance this year.

May you have good Qi flow and many blessings!

- Dr. Sonia F. Tan



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Sonia F. Tan, BA, BA(H), DAOM (DAOM degree), RAc, RTCMP

Dr. Tan is a Canadian born of Chinese descent, and a second-generation Chinese Metaphysician, following in the footsteps of her grandfather, the late Woon-Yew Tan. She is certified and practices in the fields of Traditional & Classical Chinese Medicine (TCM & CCM) and Acupuncture, Balance Acupuncture, Chinese Astrology, Chinese Face Reading, and Classical Feng Shui. A Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (a degree specializing in Integrative Medicine-Healthy Aging & Longevity), a Registered Acupuncturist

and Registered TCM Practitioner, Sonia is also a direct and first graduating class disciple of the late Grandmaster Dr. Richard Teh-Fu Tan. His most advanced level courses, after all Balance Method levels, were first completed by a group of 16 senior students. Sonia was among those 16. Dr. Sonia F. Tan is the Founder & Clinic Director of the award-winning Red Tree Wellness Inc, and the Founder & Principal of the Tan Academy of Balance Inc.

Dr. Sonia Tan has been a Certified Feng Shui and Astrology practitioner since 2011. Sonia explored the fields of Chinese Metaphysics, External & Internal Martial Arts from a young age to find guidance on the challenges in her life. She discovered an abundance of wisdom and enlightenment of body, mind, and spirit. In keeping with the spirit of Chinese Metaphysics, Sonia is happy to continue to help guide people in the ebbs and flows of life, with the wisdom of the Chinese, and the knowledge of nature and the Heavens.

JANUARY 22, 2023



吉祥
安康
長壽

YEAR OF THE WATER RABBIT

"YEAR OF HOPE"

*Connect with us on social media to share
how you plan on making this year
a year of hope!*



A Deep Dive Into the Season of Water

by Christine Lang, R.TCM.P

PHOTO: Maria Vojtovicova for Unsplash.com

In all seriousness, could someone please tell me where the entire year of 2022 has gone?

When I was a kid, my mom used to tell me that the years went by more quickly as you got older. Oh, how I long to go back to those naïve years. My developing brain couldn't begin to comprehend how time could conceivably speed up or slow down.

While I can appreciate that none of us started this 'eventful' year with a full tank, I'm not sure even the famed Chinese astrologers could have fully appreciated the breakneck pace that this year of the Water Tiger would bring. The epitome of strength and bravery, the Tiger is the king of all beasts in China. It also symbolizes the courage to rid oneself of demons. Tiger years are said to

be ripe with not only amazing discovery but also massive upheaval. This would explain the political turmoil we saw and continue to see globally.

How did the Tiger show up in my life this year?

I had big plans for 2022 (as I'm sure many did), as the Chinese New Year celebrations aligned with my 50th birthday. However, I didn't quite make it to March before those big plans were derailed. On February 28, 2022, it was announced that the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario (CTCMPAO) would be shut down, with the practice of acupuncture and the provision of TCM diagnosis returning to the public domain.

Everything in my world stopped that day, and I'm sure many of my fellow practitioners could attest to similar feelings and emotions.

Much of my professional life has revolved around not only the study and practice of this medicine, but also in its education and regulation. One of my passions has been to help train the next generation of practitioners to further establish this amazing medicine as a credible healthcare option in this province. But in one fell swoop, the entire landscape was set to change, and it triggered an emotional response not only in me, but in countless across the country. For me, that emotional response was fear.

I'm sure I wasn't the only one to take stock of my options that day. Having lived in British Columbia, completed my schooling in California and maintained currency in my NCCAOM status, I had options to continue my practice elsewhere; however, the people of Ontario deserved reliable access to safe, efficacious, regulated TCM acupuncture (and related) treatment.

As fearful as we all were, instead of accepting our fate, we collectively leaned in, went to work and accomplished what we were told was impossible. The Bill was overturned and the CTCMPAO would continue to oversee the regulation of acupuncture and TCM in Ontario.

Relief and joy are but a few of the emotions that come to mind when thinking about that day, yet how many of us took the time to sit and digest what had almost occurred? What better time to commence the introspective work of processing what we collectively experienced, than during the long, dark, winter months? Collectively, it still feels as if we have continued fear of not being considered 'good enough' to be part of the regulated healthcare

landscape in Canada. Yet practitioners, students, and patients know of and appreciate the immense value in this form of care. We had no warning of the attempt at deregulation back in March of this year but that doesn't mean we didn't choose to lean in to fear. This medicine isn't new to attempts to make it disappear, yet it continues to thrive and grow and expand. The virtue of the Water element is wisdom and is representative of mental strength, brightness, aptitude, and an agile mind so I challenge you. How can you foster these admirable traits in yourself over the coming weeks and months? How are you pushing this beautiful medicine forward and honouring those that came before us with their amazing discoveries and treatment approaches, beautiful prose, and still relevant case studies?

This winter, practice all the self-care rituals and routines we espouse to our patients. Keep your necks and low backs well protected from drafts, eat a plethora of hearty, slow cooked soups, and stews full of winter vegetables.



PHOTO: JMS for Unsplash.com

And during these cold, dark, dreary months of winter, there are many ways to ensure you've stored enough energy for the "seeds of Spring" to sprout and mature. Aside from our usual hibernation and "lots of warm layers" methods here in Canada, we can also take the TCM view of food as support.

As TCM practitioners know, the Water element relates to fear, winter, and hibernation.

Its shape is undulating (think soft snow drifts at dusk), flavour salty, colour black and direction north. It has a profound connection with the ears, bones, urinary bladder/kidneys, and low back. Anyone with arthritis (like me) can attest to 'feeling' a snowstorm approaching in their bones.

One way to combat the cold is to start the day off right with a hearty bowl of something warm, and for me that has always been oatmeal.

I know overnight oats are all the rage right now and so very fitting with the pace of life currently, but while I appreciate a solid kitchen hack that saves time, here in Canada I find its best to leave the cold prep, overnight oats for the warmer months. During the cold winter months, opt for the slower, warmth

imparting stovetop cooking method or even slow cooker overnight (or pressure cooker/instant pot) to really break down those grains for easy assimilation.

Topped with additional seeds such as chia, flax, or hemp as well as some dark coloured berries such as blueberries or blackberries for the kidneys and urinary bladder, you will be starting your day with a solid, warm nutritional foundation for the long, dark and cold winter days ahead.

Gather your inner resources over these dark months to allow the opportunity for growth this Spring. Without proper preparation of the soil, a garden won't produce a hearty crop, just as expecting massive personal or professional expansion as warmer months approach isn't realistic without adequate planning. So I offer you these questions for consideration this season:

1. How are you planning to go to your core this season?
2. What are you going to work on to ensure there's a solid foundation from which to build for the coming year?

For me it always comes back to education of patients, the public, students, and practitioners but for others it might be research or blog writing. Perhaps you want to dive into creating your own herbal foot soaks or topical liniments. Or maybe you're ready to dive into giving public talks on all things acupuncture at your local gym. Whatever lights you up while using those sharp, analytical minds during the winter months will surely pay off as you watch your garden begin to sprout come Spring.

- Christine Lang



PHOTO: Mekht for Unsplash.com

Cranberry Almond Cereal Mix

Recipe from Better Homes and Gardens - New Cookbook

Ingredients

- 1 cup regular rolled oats
- 1 cup quick cooking barley
- 1 cup bulgar or cracked wheat
- 1 cup dried cranberries (raisins or chopped dried apricots)
- ½ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- (I like to add ¼ - ½ tablespoon dried ginger for additional warming)
- Milk of choice (optional)

Preparation

1. Stir together oats, barley, bulgar/cracked wheat, cranberries, almonds, sugar, cinnamon (ginger if using) and salt. Cover tightly and store at room temperature for up to 6 months. Makes about 4 ½ cups of cereal mix (7 - 2/3 cup servings).
2. For 2 breakfast servings, in a small saucepan bring 1 1/3 cups of water to boiling. Add 2/3 cup of the cereal mix to boiling water. Reduce heat. Cover and simmer 12-15 minutes or till cereal reaches desired consistency. If desired, serve with milk of choice.

I like to top my bowl with blueberries or blackberries (or any seasonal fruit), some flax or chia seeds and a drizzle of either local honey or maple syrup.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christine Lang, R.TCM.P

Christine began her professional career with a Bachelor of Science degree in Honours Kinesiology from the University of Waterloo in 1995 and after an orthopedic surgeon in Victoria, BC recommended acupuncture for pain relief from countless sports injuries, she was captivated. In 2000, Christine completed her Master of Science degree in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine from South Baylo University in Anaheim, California.

Moving back to her home community of Barrie, Ontario in 2006, Christine began private practice. From 2013-2018 Christine was a member of council with CTCMPAO and has been faculty at Georgian College in the Acupuncture and TCM practitioner programs since their inception in 2016.

In 2018 Christine opened her own clinic, Lang Wellness Centre in Barrie, ON with the vision of becoming a leader in acupuncture & TCM care. This past October 2022, Lang Wellness hosted the first of many in-person professional CEU lectures, and plans to host monthly, public talks with different members of the amazing Lang Wellness team in the New Year.

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Promoting TCM Learning Gardens in Vancouver

PHOTO: Christiann Spangenberg

by Christiann Spangenberg

Beholding the vast inventory of a Traditional Chinese Medicine (henceforth known as TCM) herbal pharmacy from the shop window or front counter inspires a quiet sense of awe in stranger and student alike.

Like so many overlooked phenomena, such herb dispensaries are a matrix of miracles: an immense variety of medicinal ingredients, each reliant on

a marriage of site-ecology, climate, and grower's experience. They are funneled through a vast distribution and shipping network, and displayed on shelving racks, organized to exacting degrees. The amount of work that goes into such pharmacies is highly complex and underappreciated, an immense global production chain connecting growers, processors, purveyors, quality inspectors, importers, herbalists, and patients. But these are the invisible realities of the herbal trade; what the untrained eye sees is a dizzying array of glass jars stocked with roots, fruits, and fungi, and towering cabinets whose drawers spill forth aromatic herbs, twigs, and leaves. With guidance, one is led from appearance to experience, to comprehend their names and properties, and to appreciate the diversity of the herbs, as well as the spirit of the medicine. Such a

learning journey would eventually lead me to intuit the scope of the work behind this herbal tradition and culture—one whose very foundation is currently under critical threat.

My name is Hans-Christiaan Spangenberg, and I am currently leading several initiatives in Vancouver to cultivate Chinese medicinal herbs in community settings for demonstration and educational purposes. It is humbling, though perhaps fitting, that I constantly find myself at the beginning of my journey into Traditional Chinese Medicine—as patient, as herbal intern, as ethnobotany student, and now as herb-grower—given that the shape of the Dao, the metaphysical and theoretical underpinning of TCM, is a circle. The image of my herbalist teacher putting a finger on the rim of his teacup, stating that “this is the beginning of the Dao,” still haunts me as something numinous. And if I am indeed ever anew at the beginning, it is only through how my relationship with the medicine has deepened in my thus far eight-year journey of healing.

My passion for working with Chinese medicinal herbs has had a long-simmering and gradual awakening, nurtured by mentorship, and informed by my own healing. I started seeing a TCM practitioner right out of high school for a skin condition which Western medical care had difficulty resolving. I was fortunate to have found a practitioner who embraced the philosophical and metaphysical aspects of Chinese medicine as much as its praxis, and through him, I was led to explore fields as diverse as herbalism, small-scale agriculture, Daoist philosophy, medical anthropology, and ethnobotany, but always returning to Chinese medicinal herbs as a core passion, and to the context of healing.

I studied journalism and the humanities at Simon Fraser University for two years, wherein my blossoming interest in TCM led me to produce a documentary series of radio interviews with local practitioners in Vancouver for CJSF 90.1 FM, the campus community radio station. My practitioner introduced me to his herbalist teacher during

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE

FLOW Symposium 2023

MARCH 24, 25, 26, 2023

HOLIDAY INN - VANCOUVER CENTRE 711 WEST BROADWAY (AT HEATHER), VANCOUVER, BC

We are having a smaller Facilitating Life - Optimizing Wellness (FLOW) Symposium for 2023 as we ease back into running live events again.

*This year we are excited to announce that the speakers will be **Jeffrey Yuen** and **Sonia Tan**.*

*Friday, March 24 - Holographic - Mirroring Systems and Special Points Intensive with Sonia Tan.
Saturday and Sunday, March 24 and 25 - Jeffrey Yuen (more details to follow!).*

Reserve the date, and stay tuned to your emails for complete details at the beginning of January 2023.

this period, and I had the honour of volunteering as an apprentice under him, at his old partner's herbal pharmacy. Here I was informally taught the foundations of TCM and traditional Chinese herbalism. Following my two-year stint at SFU, I took a gap year, and my interest in growing TCM herbs was here first kindled by attending a 2016 conference on cultivating Asian medicinal herbs in the Pacific Northwest led by Californian herb-grower Peg Schafer. Afterwards, I decided to transfer to the Global Resource Systems program, a flexible joint science-humanities program, at the University of British Columbia, initially to study the philosophy of TCM and the cultivation of TCM herbs, before finding a greater passion for ethnobotany—one rooted in the cultivation and conservation of medicinal plants.

Food security features as one of the most crucial issues of our day, but scarcer mention is made of herbal medicine security.

Food security is defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as the state when "all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (IFPRI, 2022). Medicinal plants, and traditional herbal medicine, have been the primary form of

healthcare in human societies and Indigenous communities for thousands of years, and a much-quoted statistic from the World Health Organization estimates that around 80% of people worldwide rely on herbal medicine for their primary health, mostly people living in the Global South (Canter et al, 2005; Chi et al, 2017). Even today, plant-based medicinal compounds feature heavily in modern medicine and medical research, such as salicin from Willow bark (*Salix alba*), which is commonly used to treat fevers, and artemisin from Sweet Annie (*Artemisia annua*), whose discovery in 2011 led to its use in treating malaria. By foregrounding the prevalence and role of medicinal plants in our healthcare systems, we can see how herbal medicine security extends beyond the supply of medicinal plants, to significantly encompass the living libraries that are wild populations of medicinal plants, their ecological communities and habitats; the continuity and multi-dimensional sustainability of herb-growing and processing; and the traditional lifeways and knowledge systems of Indigenous and rural communities around the world.

Just as how cultural heritage is more often than not inextricably linked to the natural world as referents for language, and as material foundations for cultural practices and expressions, the vitality and existence of traditions and systems of herbal medicine are bound up with the cultivation, harvest, and processing of the medicinal plants in their materia medica. Unsustainable sourcing practices of TCM herbs, coupled with the destruction of their habitats, present a direct threat to the present and



PHOTO: Christiann Spangenberg

future practice of TCM. The increased popularity and global consumption of herbal medicine in recent decades correspond with a sharp decline in wild medicinal plant resources during the same period (Shan et al, 2021; Schafer, 2011). We are currently seeing that wild populations of medicinal plants are currently under significant threat from not only anthropogenically driven climate change, habitat degradation and habitat loss, but also over-harvesting to meet rising domestic and international market demand (Chi et al, 2017). In China, the majority of medicinal plants—70% of the commonly used Chinese medicinal materials—are still harvested from the wild (Chi et al, 2017; Schafer, 2011). Besides the unsustainability of wild-collecting practices, other problems with reliance on current sourcing of medicinal plants include concerns over quality, and the possibility of contamination, besides the rising costs and prices of an economically precarious period (Schafer, 2011). Our current trajectory all but indicates that we are headed to herbal medicine insecurity.

Sustainability must lie at the heart of any proposed solution.

This might take the form of in or ex-situ conservation of wild populations of endangered medicinal plants, research trials to bring as many threatened medicinal plants under cultivation (to reduce wild-harvesting pressure), the establishment of local networks of herb-growers, and fostering dialogue with Indigenous communities—the original stewards of the land—around our traditions of herbal medicine, and perhaps to see to what extent herbs within the Chinese materia medica are substitutable with locally available medicinal plants. Fortunately, some of these initiatives around the conservation and cultivation of TCM herbs are well underway around the world. Most of such research is conducted by institutes in China, but regional interest in TCM herb cultivation in countries such as Australia have led to field cultivation trials, while Germany already has 10

species of TCM herbs under small-scale commercial cultivation (Heuberger et al, 2010). Closer to home, however, are Peg Schafer, Jean Giblette, and Joe Hollis, proponents of the North American movement of Asian medicinal herb cultivation, and non-profit US-based organizations such as the Liliium Initiative, a platform dedicated to the education and networking of US-based TCM practitioners and herb growers. They are united in their recognition that a top-down regulatory and policy initiative is not nearly enough to address the long-term issues and shortcomings within current sourcing practices of TCM herbs, and instead foster a vision of grassroots and civic engagement, dialogue and collaboration amidst and with local communities whose health, stewardship, and livelihoods are bound up with this tradition of medicine.

It is the formation of community, in shared settings, that significantly drives such visions and supports a longer-term sustainability.



PHOTO: Christiann Spangenberg

To that end, in the summer of 2021, dialogue with staff at Loutet Farm, an urban farm on public parkland in North Vancouver, led me to set up the Chinese Medicinal Herb Learning Garden, using under-utilized planter boxes and marginal growing space on their farm site, with their permission and support. Loutet Farm is the main growing site of the Edible Garden Project, which is itself a program of the North Shore Neighbourhood House. Two main goals of the Edible Garden Project are to increase access of local fruits and vegetables to low-income individuals and families, and to empower both community and citizens through education, skill-development, and capacity-building. Their mandate significantly as an education-focused program aligned well with my intended goals for the garden to be a community initiative promoting TCM-based education and fostering interest in local cultivation of TCM herbs. I trialed around 18 medicinal plants in my first year at the garden, commonly used herbs such as tu hu xiang (*Agastache rugosa*) and jing jie (*Schizonepeta tenuifolia*), most of which flourished in the fertile soil. The garden project garnered some public interest in its first year through a seedling sale of excess TCM seedlings at a farmer's market, but it was through an introductory workshop on TCM herbs I led this year that increased public awareness of the project, with 26 people attending the workshop. The garden is now in its second year, and three TCM practitioners have gotten involved with the project to form a core planning group for the garden.

TCM is too often compartmentalized, viewed chiefly in its professional aspect as a body of medical practice, as a field of medical research, or as a niche market of healthcare.

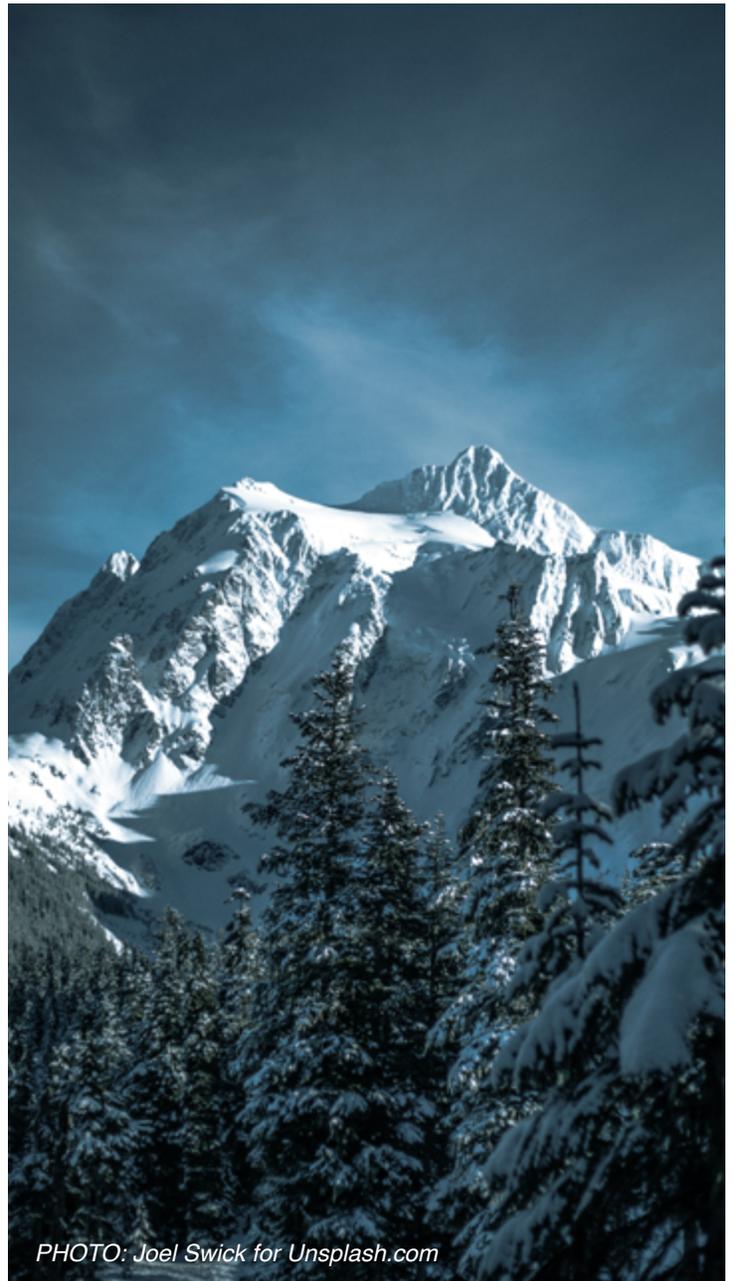


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This is necessary, of course, to develop professional standards within TCM practice, to foreground the scientific legitimacy of TCM modalities, and countless other ways in which the field of TCM is advanced. However, there is a broader need for TCM stakeholders to engage with the public in terms of exploring the roots of the medicine as a holistic lifestyle, cultural tradition, and praxis in land-based community settings. Just as any tradition of medicine and healing go beyond seeking mere curative remedies, TCM is densely interwoven with traditions of food, agriculture, philosophy, and cultural histories of Asia. Re-opening these latent horizons of TCM provide potent opportunities for engaging people with TCM, as well as guiding us in how we can localize TCM in Canada by stepping into dialogue with Indigenous communities. Gardens and other land-based spaces are significant in contextualizing the Daoist roots of TCM, and in helping us to reconnect to the natural world, the true origin of the medicine.

I am currently working towards extending the scope of Chinese herbal learning gardens by initiating dialogue with organizations around Vancouver on cultivating Asian medicinal herbs.

Besides the Chinese Medicinal Herb Learning Garden in North Vancouver, I also started two beds of TCM herbs at the Orchard Garden in 2021, an organic teaching and learning site at the University of British Columbia, and am in discussion with Roots on the Roof, a rooftop garden at the UBC student union building, as well as a school, to start growing TCM herbs at their garden sites. TCM gardens weave into subjects such as biology, food science, history,



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chemistry, literature, and tie into other traditions of herbal medicine, including those of local Indigenous communities. Fostering an educational presence in land-based community settings can work towards improving awareness of the holistic aspects of TCM, kindle community involvement around the threats facing herbal medicine, and inspire and teach folks to start growing medicinal herbs. By looking after the literal and metaphorical roots of Chinese medicine, by engaging with the herbs themselves as well as the present and future stewards of the medicine, we can ensure that this tradition of healing can be passed onto future generations for sustainable and communal stewardship.

- *Christiaan Spangenberg*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christiann Spangenberg

Christiaan Spangenberg is a gardener and medicinal herb grower of German-Chinese heritage based out of Vancouver, British Columbia. He is a recent graduate from the Global Resource Systems program at the University of British Columbia, where he studied ethnobotany and the cultivation of Asian medicinal plants, and is also a member of a working group of TCM practitioners, herb growers, and researchers in British Columbia that are working towards establishing a market for organic and locally-grown Asian medicinal herbs in the province. Christiaan is passionate about the cultivation and conservation of Asian medicinal herbs, and he is interested in exploring opportunities for dialogue between different fields that could lead to interdisciplinary collaboration. He is currently growing traditional Chinese medicinal plants at two community garden and farm sites in Vancouver to promote Asian herbal medicine and medicinal plant cultivation.

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ATCMA Year-end Update

PHOTO: Vlad Namashko for Unsplash.com

by **Suzanne Williams,**
Executive Director, ATCMA

Readers in British Columbia are no doubt aware of the changes to healthcare regulation that are currently in process in our province. Those of you outside of BC may have heard concerned and confused rumblings from the West about new legislation that will govern our profession. Most practitioners, no matter where they are or how they are regulated, probably don't know what this means for B.C. practitioners and how it could affect the profession outside of BC. It would be understandable that most would think that the ramifications of a change to healthcare regulation will be confined to B.C. However, the ATCMA cautions anyone in the healthcare field against jumping to this conclusion, and here is why...

The overhaul of healthcare regulation in B.C. was instigated by years-long investigation and reporting by Harry Cayton, the former chief executive of the U.K.'s Professional Standards Authority. After complaints about the College of Dental Surgeons of B.C. came to light, in particular a lack of transparency and a focus on protecting practitioners over the public, the B.C. government appointed Mr. Cayton to investigate not just the CDSBC, but the state of health regulation in the province. Cayton determined that many of the 20 health profession colleges are failing to put public safety and protection at the forefront of their operations. He recommended replacing current healthcare regulation in its entirety, merging the current regulatory bodies into six colleges, and adding an Oversight Body to essentially act as a manager of the regulators. Fast forward to 2022, and the Healthcare Professions and Occupations Act has been developed by a tri-party committee of the B.C. Legislature, pushed through with little public and

professional consultation, and passed as a law. As you can see, acupuncturists and TCM practitioners in B.C., and all health professions, are being subject to a major overhaul in regulation because of deep-seated issues in another healthcare profession. In developing his report, we understand that Mr. Cayton drew from his experience in the U.K. and looked to healthcare regulation models in other countries.

What happens in one region and in one industry may happen in another. Practitioners in other geographies should therefore take note of the changes to healthcare regulation in B.C.

The B.C. Health Professions Act (HPA) is being replaced by a new piece of legislation the Health Professions and Occupations Act (HPOA). It includes some important and positive changes to healthcare regulation, such as better protection and recourse for victims of sexual misconduct, as well as cultural safety and humility standards. It is intended to promote clear separation of public and practitioner interests to put patient/client safety first. However, there is cause for concern about the legislative process, as well as much of the content of the new Act.

While nobody knows exactly how the HPOA will be interpreted or implemented, in the interest of keeping practitioners fully informed, the ATCMA is sharing what we know so far, particularly the items that, at the outset, make us uneasy.

- Bill 36, the HPOA, is now a law after a very quick trip through the legislative process. It was tabled for First Reading on October 19, then to Second Reading on October 27. On November 24 it went to the Committee stage, was reported upon, went to Third Reading, was voted on, passed, and received Royal Assent. All in one day. By that day, the committee had only reviewed about 220 of the >400 clauses in the HPOA (it is an abnormally large piece of legislation). Normally, all clauses of a Bill are reviewed at the committee stage before they are voted on in the legislature; however, the HPOA committee did not follow this procedure. Instead, they sent the Bill to the legislature for a third reading before all of the clauses had been reviewed.



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It then passed because all of the NDP Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) voted in favour of the Bill. Liberal MLAs voted against it, but did not offer an explanation as to why. All Green part MLAs voted against it because they opposed the undemocratic behaviour of the committee, not because they had any issues with the content. Now that it has received Royal Assent, the HPOA is a law that sits inactive until it is officially brought into force by B.C.'s Lieutenant Governor. There is no official word on when this will happen, as it depends somewhat on the timing of the next provincial election.

- Until the HPOA is implemented, it is basically business as usual for the CTCMA. There is nothing in the HPOA that *forces* amalgamation by a certain date. It gives legal framework for the amalgamation of current and future

colleges. It does, however, give the Minister of Health the authority to order colleges to amalgamate.

- Amalgamation could take years, and initially practitioners might not notice much in their day-to-day clinical lives. However, as soon as the HPOA takes effect and/or amalgamation begins, individual college boards of directors will dissolve. New colleges will form boards, and all discipline tasks will be the responsibility of the new Oversight Body. The inquiry function will remain with the colleges, even after amalgamation.
- Many practitioners have expressed concern to the ATCMA that after amalgamation, acupuncturists and TCM practitioners will not be adequately represented on college boards of directors. There will be eleven board

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seats in each amalgamated college, comprised of five public members, five professional members and one Indigenous member. All will be appointed in line with a competency based evaluation system for the appointments. The details of the evaluation system have not been announced. As TCM and acupuncture will likely be amalgamated into a small college that includes RMTs, chiropractors and naturopathic doctors, our profession would probably have at least one seat on the new board. Just as there are now, each college will have working committees (e.g., for inquiry, education and examinations, finance, patient relations, quality assurance etc.), so it will be important that they include strong representation from TCM and acupuncture, as the committees perform operational tasks that affect the day-to-day lives of registrants.

- The ATCMA shares practitioners' concerns regarding the cost of implementation of the HPOA and amalgamation. The remaining

un-amalgamated colleges do not have the money for the process, and they have told the Ministry of Health as much. They have also expressed concern over the fairness of placing the financial burden for legislative change on registrants. There is also the question of the impact on registration fees post-amalgamation. The Cayton Report indicates that fees should drop thanks to synergies and efficiencies achieved through cost sharing by the merged colleges. However,

- There will be no external mechanism of justice for practitioners to appeal a disciplinary decision made against them. Registrants who want to appeal a decision will have to do so through the in-house Superintendent - they will not be able to go to the court system. If there is a major issue like a Human Rights violation, it could be taken to the Supreme Court of Canada, but if a practitioner disagrees with a disciplinary decision they will not be able to take the complaint to a court of law.



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- The inquiry function will remain with the colleges, but discipline will be handled by the Oversight Body. In the current system, if a college needs to inspect a clinic or see a practitioner's records as part of an inquiry, it obtains an order from the inquiry committee, notifies the practitioner about the order and sends an inspector to view the practitioner's clinic or relevant files. Most of the time, practitioners comply with orders and there is zero issue. On the very rare occasion when a practitioner doesn't comply, the inquiry committee can either get a court order for inspection or have security guards go with the Inspector to carry out the inspection order. When that happens, it's usually ugly. Under the new HPOA, the court order/ security guard step will essentially be removed. The Inspector will be able to treat the inspection as though they already have a "search and seize" order if the practitioner doesn't comply.
- Colleges will no longer have the right to launch an Own Motion Investigation. Under the HPOA, the Registrar would have to act as the complainant and then the inquiry committee would take over. This keeps the functions separate and acts as a check and balance so that colleges cannot just launch a bunch of investigations at will.
- All prior complaints will be published, regardless of how old they are, or how they were resolved. This goes beyond what Cayton had recommended – that only those with adverse outcomes be published.
- The discipline committee will be able to decide whether or not to factor in prior complaints when they are determining disciplinary action.
- Some misinformation regarding vaccination requirements under the HPOA has been circulating, leading some practitioners to believe that vaccination will definitely be mandatory for all healthcare workers. This is not the case. The HPOA stipulates that all new colleges must to include a clause in the bylaws that states **whether or not** vaccination will be mandatory for registrants. However, public health directives would override this. The big change here is that it puts the responsibility on the colleges to implement and enforce vaccination requirements, either if the bylaws say it's mandatory, or if there's a public health order. The colleges are not happy about this - they say it should be left to the Provincial Health Office as is a massive job that requires considerable resources. Since the colleges will be responsible for enforcing vaccine mandates, they'll have the power to cancel or deny renewal of registrations without proof of vaccination, but only if vaccination is mandated in the bylaws or by provincial health order.
- The Minister of Health will not suddenly be able place new conditions on a college/s, but they will have a lot more power. The HPOA basically formalizes



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a practice that is already in place. Right now all Ministers in the B.C. government have the ability to sign orders without taking legislation to cabinet. Ministers do this all the time - for example, David Eby (now the Premier of B.C.) ordered that all car owners would receive a \$100 rebate from the Insurance Corporation of B.C. (ICBC) without taking this piece of legislation to cabinet or government for a vote.

- New colleges will have to establish a fund for victims of sexual abuse. They'll have the ability to seek to recoup the funds from perpetrators; however, they will only be able to retrieve the funds if the practitioner remains a registrant. If their license is revoked or if they stop practicing, the colleges won't be able to recoup the funds.
- Colleges will be able to change **some** bylaws without consulting registrants. For example - fees! The improved efficiency is fine for changes like typos or updating practice standards, but not good for bigger changes, like... FEES! Under the HPOA, the Oversight Body will review the change request then advise the Minister of Health of the requested changes.

The Minister will then direct the college board of directors to change the bylaws. Zero public or practitioner consultation is required – alarming, no?

While the implications of the HPOA are not yet clear, it is apparent that these major changes to healthcare regulation will have a deep and significant impact on healthcare workers, including acupuncturists and TCM practitioners.

We encourage all practitioners in B.C. to stay apprised of the developments and join the ATCMA (<https://atcma.org/online-membership-registration/>) so that you can be a part of the conversation as the events of HPOA implementation and amalgamation unfold. Those of you in other jurisdictions – do not think that legislation in your area will remain the same or only see positive change. Stay involved in your profession, not just your practice, so that your voice is heard by your legislators and regulators.

- Suzanne Williams, Executive Director, ATCMA



Suzanne Williams,
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Suzanne is the Executive Director of the ATCMA and an active practicing Registered Acupuncturist in Vancouver, BC. She graduated from ICTCMV and Langara College's Balance System of Acupuncture Certificate Program and is currently working towards her R.TCM.P designation. Suzanne studied and worked in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China for over 12 years and speaks and reads Mandarin Chinese. She draws on her career in business market research and consulting in China and Canada to advocate for the BC TCM and Acupuncture profession and grow the range of benefits for the ATCMA membership.



The Growth of CARB-TCMPA

Dan Garcia
Executive Director, CARB-TCMPA

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Taking time to reflect on one's purpose and aspirations is an important activity on an individual basis and as an organization supporting professionals.

As part of our own introspection and desire for continuous improvement, the Board engaged in several facilitated discussions to reflect on CARB's core purpose and identify aspirations for the coming years. This exercise helped us crystalize our core mission and develop a shared understanding and alignment with our member Colleges.

We are excited to share our new mission, vision, and values with the TCM community:

- **Mission:** To set pan-Canadian standards and to support members across the country in meeting these standards.
- **Vision:** Acupuncture and TCM is an integral part of the healthcare system and is accessible to all.
- **Core values:** Transparency, quality, collaboration, innovation, and responsibility

In addition to the visioning work that the Board undertook, we also conducted a comprehensive governance review in 2022. The recommendations that the governance experts supplied us are helping us create a roadmap of key activities for the Board.

One of the coming projects is a review of our multi-year strategic plan where we will consider key activities to help us position TCM and Acupuncture as an essential and valued part of the Canadian healthcare system.

This foundational work enables us to better prepare for the future of the organization and the Pan-Canadian Examination (PCE) program. We are in the early stages of developing a plan to review the Pan-Canadian Standard for Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists: Entry-Level Occupational Competency Profile which was last reviewed about 5 years ago. We expect this to be the first of several projects to reinvest in the quality and sustainability of the PCE program in the coming years.

The October 2022 PCE exam administration exceeded our anticipated candidate volumes. At the most recent sitting we had 309 candidates write the Acupuncturists exam, 93 wrote the TCM Herbalists exam, and 106 attempted the TCM Practitioners exam. There was a total of 508 candidates who wrote the PCE in October, and 790 candidates in total across both PCE sittings in 2022. The next exam administration will be held in April 2023. Candidates who are interested in registering for the April 2023 exams should contact their provincial regulator for registration instructions and eligibility details.

As my position as the inaugural Executive Director of CARB-TCMPA comes to an end, the Board has begun the process of recruiting and selecting a new Executive Director. The nature of this position has evolved over the past 3 years and the organization is at the point where it needs the support of a full-

time leader. We will be working with an executive search firm throughout the process and will be sharing more information about this transition as it becomes available.

On a personal note, it has been an absolute pleasure working with so many of you over the past three years.

I am happy to have contributed to the advancement of the profession in Canada and believe that CARB-TCMPA is well positioned to make a lasting and meaningful contribution to the profession under the guidance of the next Executive Director.

- Dan Garcia



ABOUT CARB- TCMPA

The Canadian Alliance of Regulatory Bodies of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists (CARB-TCMPA) is the national forum and voice of provincial regulatory authorities that are established by their respective provincial legislation. Through collaborative activities, CARB-TCMPA promotes quality practice and labour mobility across Canada. For more information about CARB-TCMPA, visit: carb-tcmpa.org

A close-up photograph of pink cherry blossoms in full bloom, set against a dark, almost black background. The flowers are the central focus, with their delicate petals and stamens clearly visible. The lighting highlights the texture of the petals and the vibrant pink color.

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