

## Discussion on Medical History Research in China: Current Situation, Problems and Prospects

Ruotong Zhao

School of History, Northwest University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 710069

**Keywords:** Chinese Medical History; Research Status and Problems; Prospect

**Abstract:** Although China has made great progress in medical history research, there are still many shortcomings and dilemmas in terms of research validity, research concepts and research methods. By combing the current research situation of medical history in China, this paper puts forward its own ideas and prospects based on the domestic reality and the problems in the research.

### 1. Introduction

Medical treatment is an important means to ensure the survival and development of human beings. The development of medicine is an important factor affecting the quality of life. Medical history, also known as medical social history, is different from traditional medical history in terms of disease and medicine itself. It is a study of medicine, disease history and related issues from the perspective of social history. With the penetration of new cultural history, social history, gender history and anthropological methods and theories into the study of history, some high-quality essays and monographs have appeared in medical history research, but there are still many deficiencies, problems and dilemmas.

### 2. Research status

Europe and the United States have a long history of medical history research. In the 1960s and 1970s, as social problems related to medical care became more prominent, medical sociology and anthropology continued to develop, coupled with post-modern historiography and new cultural history and other historical trends. Increasingly, medical history research, including the history of disease, has gradually become part of mainstream Western history. In the early 20th century, Chen Yu and Chen Yu of China's history circles began to get involved in medical history, but for most of the time, medical history research was mainly undertaken by Chinese medical researchers. Until the 1980s, with the revival of social history research, the history circle began to focus on the medical and medical fields. In particular, the SARS epidemic in 2003 made us realize that modern medicine and public health systems did not keep the threat of plague away from modern society, and also stimulated the academic research on public health and disease history. This incident began to prompt people more. Focus on the history of disease and medical care and reflect on modern health care policies. It is in this context that the study of medical history in China began to flourish. At present, the research orientation of medical history in China is mainly as follows:

First, in some specific studies, the medical factors of the previously neglected diseases were introduced to better explain some historical phenomena. For example, Lin Fuji published the article "Dr. Epidemic and Religion in the Late Eastern Han Dynasty" published in the 66th, 3rd (September 1995) of the Journal of the Institute of History and Languages of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Exploring and interpreting the development of the three religious forces of Wu, Dao and Bu at that time. Cao Shuji's article "The Epidemic of Plague and the Change of North China Society (1580-1644)" published in the first issue of "Historical Research" in 1997, through the description of the plague epidemic in North China, believes that "the abnormal changes in the ecological environment are caused by the Ming Dynasty. One of the main reasons for the collapse."

Second, through the investigation and investigation of disease medical care and related issues, explain some important historical aspects that have been neglected in the past. For example: Liang

Gengyi's article "Public Health Problems in Southern Song City" published in the 70th book of the Academia Sinica's History and Languages Institute (Taipei) (March 1999) shows the public health status of the Southern Song Dynasty from a medical perspective. Jin Shiqi's "The Role of Ancient Healers - Also on Its Identity and Status" published in the 1st issue of New History (Taipei) in 1995, comprehensively and comprehensively introduces the basic situation of the status and identity of doctors in the Spring and Autumn Period to the Han Dynasty.

Third, explore the interaction between disease medical care and society. For example: Cao Shuji and Li Yushang on the impact of plague on Chinese society since the 18th century (Cao Shuji, Li Yushang: "The plague epidemic and social changes in Yunnan in the 18th and 19th centuries", Fudan University Press, 2001). Yu Xinzhong's analysis of the impact of the plague in the south of the Yangtze River on the population (A preliminary study on the impact of the plague in the south of the Yangtze River on the population), China Population Science, No. 2, 2001).

Fourth, taking disease medical itself or a related content as an entry point, under the guidance of certain problem consciousness, discuss, analyze or interpret some important issues in the development of social history. For example, Liang Qizi pointed out that the formation of the concept of disease is not only a question of medical knowledge, but also a complex social and cultural factor ("History of the Evolution of the Concept of Leprosy in China"). The Journal of the Institute of History and Languages of the Academia Sinica (Taipei), the 70th second (June 1999). Yang Nianqun demonstrated the important role of "local sense" in this process through the discussion of the introduction and establishment of Western medical systems and facilities in modern China ("Yang Nianqun Self-Selected Works", Guangxi Normal University Press, 2001, No. 410-456 pages).

### 3. Study the existing problems

The research on medical history in China has achieved some gratifying results. For example, many experts and scholars at home and abroad have published several articles on this subject in recent years. Some students and medical history enthusiasts have also boldly conducted comparative research, combining history and theory, and have drawn some inspiring views. Compared with institutional history, social history, cultural history, etc., although the research on medical history in China is refreshing, there are still many shortcomings in the study of medical history in China, from the perspective of research team and academic accumulation and development. There is also great room for development.

Since the end of the 19th century, Western medicine has occupied the historical position of scientific development, and Chinese traditional medicine has never been transformed into a "hero" in the historical writing after the great changes in the late Qing Dynasty. In the new cultural movement in the early 20th century, traditional medicine became the main symbol of the "backward" and "superstitious" parts of Chinese old culture. Since the middle of the 20th century, traditional medicine has been revered as a national quintessence in China, but its knowledge content and academic system have been greatly westernized. Although there have been several changes in the trend of Chinese historiography, people's concerns still focus on the content of institutions, social development, events, etc., lacking real attention to "people", and not around "people" to explore and Write history. Under this concept, it is believed that diseases and medical treatments in history are "possible" but "insignificant". In addition, as an emerging research, medical history is regarded as in line with the international academic trend, and is welcomed by many young people who are relatively new and so eager to let some mature researchers see it as "fashionable" and "Hot spots", compared with the "historical orthodoxy" such as political history and economic history, medical history rather than historical focus, so they are resentful and questionable to medical history graduate students. Therefore, compared with the development of mature and diversified Western medical history, the "appropriateness" of Chinese medical history in the scope of Chinese historiography has been questioned and even criticized, which has led to the study of medical history in the history of Chinese mainland. In the non-mainstream area, this has greatly affected the further development of medical history research. □□

In the European and American academic circles, after years of exchanges and exchanges, the boundaries between internal and external history formed by backgrounds of different disciplines have become blurred, and diseases and medicines are no longer viewed in isolation, and they are regarded as overall scientific thinking and society. Part of the culture. In China, the concept of medical history research is still very backward. The research on the history of science and technology in the medical world is called "internal history", which is commensurate with "medical history", while the related research in history is "external history" and "medical history". "Similar. The reason is mainly because medical history researchers are mostly about the medical history from the perspective of social history or cultural history, and there is little overlap with medical training. The medical history researchers in the medical field are almost all medical doctors. Most of them accept biomedical and traditional Chinese medicine training under the modern scientific framework. They lack the skills of historiography, so their research often has weak data, indifferent problem awareness, and facts. problem. At the same time, medical history research is basically a dispensable marginal discipline in the medical profession, especially in the Western medical profession. This makes the medical history lack sufficient disciplinary power and resources, can not integrate researchers from different disciplines to form a multi-disciplinary research cluster, and form a disciplinary training system with various disciplines and diverse facilities that is truly centered on medical history.

There are many problems in China's medical history research in China that are not negligible in terms of academic concepts and methods. Influenced by the history of Western science, in the past, the study of medical history in China tried to put Chinese medicine into the pattern of scientific history, but it never came out. This is also the fundamental reason why the research results of traditional medical history are difficult to be recognized by the history circles. At present, China's medical history has not yet entered the main body of historical writing. The study of ideological history, institutional history and cultural history rarely pays attention to the influence of the concept of life and health on the progress of Chinese civilization. At the same time, as an emerging research, China has not shown enough new realm and new weather in medical history research. Although medical history research has been attributed to the "new historiography" by many researchers, it is still difficult to implement and lead the development of "new historiography". The new meaning and new weather revealed by it are still outstanding. It is far from enough, and the researchers' academic ideas and research methods are varied. Many academic ideas and research methods of most research results are quite traditional. In general, they lack understanding and grasp of international mainstream academic achievements. Most of them are old ideas. The old methods are explored and new problems are studied, and their research cannot be placed in the context of international academic development.

#### **4. Research prospects**

Although there are many deficiencies and problems in the study of medical history in China, the development prospects are still very good, just as Professor Liang Qizi pointed out in his book "Face to Diseases: Medical Concepts and Organizations in Traditional Chinese Society": "If Young Scholars Can By grasping more favorable analytical tools and historical materials, and continuing to go on, future medical history research can be built on deeper description and analysis, and gradually develop to a higher level and a wider scope. Only in this way can we One day, when we find the true vitality of medical history, we can more fully understand the ancient Chinese civilization. At that time, scholars who studied the medical history of other civilizations had to refer to the works of Chinese medical history. I believe that one day, the medical history of China It will truly become the "mainstream of the future" from the "alternatives of the past." Therefore, China should not be self-enclosed in the study of medical history. It needs to have appropriate academic concepts, research methods and analytical tools, and break through through internal referrals. "Internal and external history" to overcome difficulties and achieve mutual integration. At the same time, it should also be through seminars and workshops as much as possible. Young students exchange and exchange visits and other forms, strengthen dialogue and communication between different

disciplines, change the status of previous single-disciplinary training, and hope to provide relevant research for multi-disciplinary research, and hope that through such efforts, let us Not only can we better understand and interpret history, but also understand and think about modern Chinese medicine and biomedical science in a more comprehensive and in-depth way, so as to enhance the understanding of the value and significance of medical history research, and even establish a greater influence. A relatively independent medical history discipline offers possibilities.

## References

- [1] Liang Qizi. Facing the disease: medical concept and organization of traditional Chinese society [M]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2012: 13
- [2] Liang Qizi. For the study of medical history in China [N]. China Reading, 2011 (6)
- [3] Yu Xinzhong. Problems and Prospects of Medical History Research in China Today [J]. Historical Research, 2015,(2):22-27
- [4] Yu Xinzhong. Focus on Life——The rise of disease medical treatment on both sides of the Taiwan Straits[J]. Social History Research, 2001(3): 94-98
- [5] Yu Xinzhong. The past, reality and possibility of the exploration of Chinese disease and medical history [J]. Historical Research 2003(4):158-168
- [6] Chen Xiufen. Medical History Research in Taiwan (1990-2010)——Also on its Relationship with "New History"[J]. Sinology Research Communication, 2010(8): 19-28
- [7] Jiang Zhushan. "Global Turn": A Preliminary Study of Medical History in a Global Perspective [J]. Humanities Journal. 2013, (10): 84-92
- [8] Zhang Xing. The rise and fall of the concept of medical "outside history" [J]. Medical History Expo, 2009 (3): 26
- [9] Liao Yuqun. Medical doctors also: understanding Chinese traditional medicine [M]. Taipei: Dongda Book Company, 2003: 224