



## Traditional Chinese

To the uninitiated, traditional Chinese medicine often seems like a weird combination of twigs and builders' rubble. From tree bark to chalk sticks to dried seahorses and dried deer penises (ouch!), the contents of jars lining traditional Chinese medicine shops seem as bewildering as they are amusing. To the initiated, however, those jars are brimming with treasures, whose potent elements have been curing ailments for over 2,000 years.

Despite its long history, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) still carries an air of mystery. Even for those who regularly brew up a pot of invigorating tonic, the mystic of the healing properties of TCM and the pharmacists who dispense it, never wanes.

In essence, TCM is based on a set of interventions designed to restore balance to human beings. So what a Western-trained doctor may consider as an illness, a traditional Chinese practitioners might describe as a matter of disharmony or imbalance within a

person's yin, yang, qi and the five elements – wood, fire, earth, metal, and water.

TCM restores balance to the body by treating the source or the problem, rather than the ailment. Consequently, a person may need to take TCM for weeks or even months to complete their prescribed treatment. Many tomes have been written on this over the centuries, so filling the entire contents of this magazine with the hows and whys of how TCM restores balance would only scratch the surface on the subject. But one key factor that determines how effective treatments are is the quality of the herbs used in prescriptions.

The active components in herbs used in TCM vary considerably from year to year, and from region to region where they are harvested. This inconsistency is one of the main reasons for TCM cures not being scientifically accepted. Even the temperature at which herbs are boiled at can affect the healing properties of the resulting tonic.

# Medicine Enters New Era

## 中藥邁進新紀元

Eu Yan Sang, one of the most respected names in TCM, is trying to change this with the development of a system that will ensure the consistency and quality of herbs.

Alice Wong, Managing Director, Eu Yan Sang, told members during the Chamber's visit to its state-of-the-art processing facility on January 8, that each herb undergoes a rigorous "fingerprinting" process to determine the individual chromatographic fingerprint of each herb and preparation.

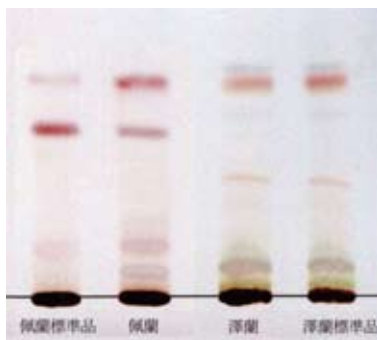
"This technology enables us to label each of the herbs with a 'chemical barcode' and create a unique quality control system for TCM," she explained. "In order to bring TCM to the international marketplace, the application of the scientific and systematic approach of fingerprinting is indispensable."

Eu Yang Sang, which was founded by Eu Kwong Pai in Malaysia in 1879, has dozens of outlets in Hong Kong, Mainland China, Singapore and Malaysia. Ms Wong said the company plans to further expand globally, now that its new techniques can assure a consistent quality of products.

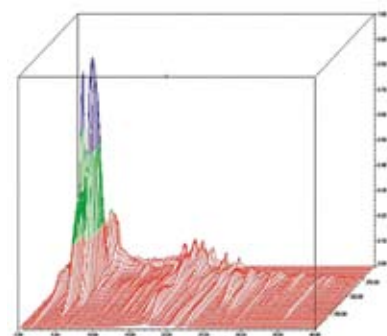
It is also redefining how TCM is taken. Traditionally, herbs are boiled in water for up to an hour or longer so that the herbs release their nutrients to create a tonic. Eu Yan Sang has devised a technique that can dry the tonic into granules that can be used in casuals, or as pills.

Ms Wong said given the hectic lifestyle that many people now lead, spending around an hour boiling herbs two or three times

a day is not feasible. Therefore, capsule formulas are a convenient alternative. An added advantage of capsules is that the consistency of their healing properties is carefully monitored. ❀



Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) is a traditional analytical and separation method used in testing Chinese medicines. It enables the rapid identification of the differences in the active components of individual herbs of different origins, sources, collection periods and processing methods. 薄層色譜法是用以分析和分隔中藥成分的傳統測試技術，能迅速分辨不同產地、來源、採集時間和處理方式的中藥材，以及其所含活性成分的差異。



High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) has become one of the most important tools in analyzing and identifying the chemical components of individual herbs. 高效液相色譜已成為中藥化學成分的重要分析和分辨工具之一。



Chamber members pose for a group photo outside Eu Yan Sang's new state-of-the-art production facility with the company's Managing Director Alice Wong (centre).  
會員與余仁生董事總經理黃雪英(中)在余仁生新設的高科技廠房外合照。

對行外人來說，中藥看來不外乎是樹枝和碎石的奇怪拼湊。從樹皮至白朮、乾海馬以至鹿鞭，傳統中藥店內排列整齊的瓶子所存放的藥材既古怪又有趣。不過，對行內人來說，那些瓶子卻滿載珍寶，內裡全是過去二千多年來治癒無數病患的妙藥。

中藥雖然源遠流長，但仍帶著絲絲的神秘色彩；即使對於經常煎製中藥補品的人士而言，中藥的療效以至處方人員也總是披著神秘的面紗。

在本質上，中藥療法以一套能有效恢復人體機能平衡的調理方法為基礎。因此，西醫診斷出來的疾病，中醫可能視之為人體內的陰、陽、氣和五行(即金、木、水、火、土)的失調或失衡現象。

中藥並非著重治療疾病，而是透過固本培元及調理功能，以恢復身體機能的平衡。故此，中藥療程可能長達數星期、甚至數個月不等。千百年來，許多卷籍均有論述中藥何以恢復身體機能的平衡，即使本刊用盡今期篇幅對此加以解說，也只算是九牛一毛而已。然而，處方所用的中草藥品質，卻是影響療效的主要因素。

中草藥的活性成分會因應不同的年份和出產地而大有差異，這種參差情況是中藥療法未能被科學接納的主因之一。此外，煎藥的溫度也足以影響草藥的療效。

有見及此，家傳戶曉的中藥品牌余仁生便研發出一套標準化的中藥系統，以確保草藥的品質能夠達到一致。

本會於1月8日率團參觀余仁生新設的高科技廠房時，其董事總經理黃雪英表示，余仁生精密的「指紋」鑑別設備可嚴格鑑定每種草藥和方劑的獨特指紋圖譜。

她解釋：「這項技術讓我們得以用『化學條碼』來標籤每種草藥，為中藥建立了獨有的品質控制系統。為使中藥能打進國際市場，指紋圖譜這種科學而系統化的鑑別方法可謂不可或缺。」

余仁生於1879年由余廣培於馬來西亞創立，目前在香港、中國內地、新加坡和馬來西亞設有數十間分店。黃女士說，有見現行的新技術能夠劃一中藥產品的品質，故公司計劃把業務進一步擴展至世界各地。

此外，余仁生也為中藥的服用方法打開了新的一頁。傳統的中藥煎製方法是用水把草藥加熱一小時或以上，讓草藥釋放養分，形成補劑。余仁生則開創出一種乾製技術，能夠把中藥湯劑製成顆粒，再用以製成膠囊或補丸。

黃女士表示，由於都市人大多生活緊張，要他們每天花約一小時煎兩、三次中草藥實不可行，因此，膠囊配方是方便之選，而膠囊的另一個好處是其療效能夠受到嚴格監控，確保品質一致。✿