

# Interview with Professor Charlie Xue, WFAS Sydney 2013 Keynote Speaker

**Johannah Shergis\*** PhD  
RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

## Introduction

Professor Charlie Xue is the Head of School of Health Sciences, RMIT University, Director of the Traditional & Complementary Medicine Program, RMIT Health Innovations Research Institute and Inaugural Chair, Chinese Medicine Board of Australia. Prof Xue's main interest is in clinical research to evaluate the efficacy and safety of herbal medicine and acupuncture for respiratory diseases and pain management. His research has been supported by many research grants from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australian Research Council (ARC), State and Federal Governments, as well as international research grants. Prof Xue also advises partners in industry, the profession and organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO). In addition, Prof Xue is a Grant Review Panel Member for the NHMRC. Prof Xue has more than 140 publications in peer reviewed journals and significantly contributes to evidence-based medicine and practice. Prof Xue is a keynote speaker at the WFAS 2013 8th World Conference on Acupuncture. We invited him to share his experience and knowledge of Chinese medicine for AJACM readers.

## The Questions

***JS: What are your special interests in Chinese medicine research and education?***

CX: My overall interest in Chinese medicine research and education is to develop evidence-based Chinese medicine practice and research.

***JS: What do you see is your current role in the field of Chinese medicine in Australia and internationally?***

CX: Over the years I have contributed to Chinese medicine education and research and clinical practice standards in Australia and internationally through a range of activities. Firstly, I was the head of Chinese medicine at RMIT University for 16 years where I led the development of four degree programs, plus an international program in Hong Kong. The programs have contributed to producing quality practitioners for the Chinese medicine profession. My role in research, particularly in clinical studies, has focused on chronic disease and the ageing population and has contributed to evidence generation, evidence synthesis and evidence translation for determining the potential role of Chinese medicine for common chronic conditions. I was a board member for the Chinese Medicine Registration Board of Victoria for 12 years, including three years as the Deputy President of the Board. From 2011, I was appointed the Inaugural Chair of the Chinese Medicine Registration Board of Australia by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council of the Australian Government. I think this all comes together to have a common theme to promote a standard setting, quality practice and evidence-based practice and research.

***JS: In your opinion, what are the major achievements in Chinese medicine in the last ten years?***

CX: The major achievements in Australia have been developing quality higher education programs, statutory regulation

\* Correspondent author; e-mail: johannah.shergis@rmit.edu.au

framework for professional registration, initially in Victoria and then nationally, increasing the number of research projects, particularly in clinical research, as well as establishing a stronger platform for communication between Chinese medicine and other health care professions.

***JS: In your opinion, what are some matters requiring attention in the current Chinese medicine/acupuncture profession?***

CX: I think there are four areas that require the profession to give priority. Firstly, continuing professional education. This is a challenge because of diverse practitioner educational backgrounds with some needing more education and training in biomedical science, infection control, ethics, and understanding contemporary health practice issues including drug-herb interactions, as well as being effective communicators with other health care professions – in the Australian healthcare system, Chinese medicine is not standalone. The second area will be postgraduate studies and to be involved in research. It is not for everybody to be a PhD scholar, however what is really important is to promote evidence-based research and practice. All practitioners need to have a good understanding about scientific methodology and become effective consumers of research literature. The third thing is to develop research strengths that can answer critical clinical questions, for example benefit versus risk and value for money of Chinese medicine interventions for specific health conditions; and finally, I think international collaboration to maximise benefit of limited resources will be a critical area.

***JS: What are the most urgent questions we need to address in Chinese medicine, in terms of research and education?***

CX: We need to establish an evidence base that supports the use of Chinese medicine and if that is demonstrated,

then determine value for money of these interventions and conditions.

***JS: How do you think the status of Chinese medicine will change in the next 20 years?***

CX: I think Chinese medicine should become a component of integrative care in a contemporary health care system in Australia and internationally. Certainly reviewing the systems in place in China and South Korea, but we should go one step further and ensure that the integration is well supported by quality evidence.

***JS: What advice do you have for current students and new graduates on how to survive the first few years of practice?***

CX: Be realistic on the time required for building up the clientele, continue to study, improve your clinical skills and experience, find a clinical mentor and engage in group discussion on specific cases.

***JS: What advice do you have for practitioners on how to respond to negative comments about TCM in the media?***

CX: There is a need to have a clear policy statement from the profession that the Chinese medicine profession supports and promotes evidence-based practice development, and will work towards this direction. We are not there yet, and it requires close partnership in research and practice with other health care professions.

***Thank you very much for your time and answers!***

***For more information about Prof Xue, please visit [www.rmit.edu.au/staff/charlie-xue](http://www.rmit.edu.au/staff/charlie-xue)***