

# A Study of Third–Semester Traditional Chinese Medicine Science Students

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Pharmacology is an important and compulsory subject for undergraduate traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) science students. However, at this stage, the third semester TCM science students still have some misunderstanding and neglects about pharmacology. The research method was conducted by interviewing four undergraduate TCM science students who had graduated and were planning to gain their next degree in different fields in terms of pharmacology studies methods, application of pharmacology knowledge, and perceptions of pharmacology. The study found third semester undergraduate TCM science students had difficulties in learning pharmacology. However, the use of mnemonics, scenario simulation, literature writing and reading, etc. helped to motivate students and assisted in memorizing relevant knowledge points. Third semester TCM science students should pay attention to the study of pharmacology and find appropriate method in the meantime. In addition, educators and educational institutions are recommended to adjust teaching strategies according to students' status.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Pharmacology has a comprehensive and mature theoretical system for the interpretation of drug interactions in the body and is also crucial for the investigation of drug mechanisms of action. It not only broadens the students' knowledge of physiology and pathology, but also provides a crucial initiation for their future research work. The course in pharmacology as a foundation course in the undergraduate period can also help students to better participate in future research programs in clinical medicine, basic medicine, pharmacy, chemistry, biological sciences, etc. According to statistics in 2018, adverse drug reactions due to medication errors cause or contribute to up to 2420 deaths per year in the UK (Elliott, 2018), which means that poor and weak knowledge of pharmacology is an important factor in this tragedy. For students of Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) department, pharmacology is the breakthrough of Chinese herbs being used in the pharmaceutical field, but also a powerful weapon to make TCM scientization. For instance, Tu Youyou, the winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, graduated from the Department of Pharmacy of Peking University and won the prize for her invention of the new antimalarial drugs that named artemisinin and dihydroartemisinin, which reflects the great value of pharmacology in the application of TCM. Nevertheless, the truth is that the passion of nowadays students for learning pharmacology is unable to match the value created by pharmacology. A large number of students ashamed that their cognitive system of pharmacology and pharmacology-related knowledge is not mature enough and their grasp of key points is not firm sufficiently for practical application in clinical or scientific research. In addition, the abuse of Chinese medicine and other types of drugs is an important issue that endangers human health. As pharmacology is a difficult and demanding interdisciplinary course, it is not easy for third-semester undergraduates to learn in this major, so it is important to find appropriate learning strategies and methods.

This paper is based on the practical experience of graduated TCM science undergraduate in their third semester of pharmacology during undergraduate period to explain effective methods of learning pharmacology and its implications for the future. The objective is to make students aware of the importance of pharmacology in their future research activity and clinical work, to motivate those students to devoted themselves into studying pharmacology. In addition, the article also includes the study methods from TCM science graduates contribute to pharmacology courses, as well as the recommendation to write papers in the related field of pharmacology, as well as suggestions for the formulation of study plans.

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