The 10-year Anniversary of the American Journal of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine

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Like many other great ideas, the need for an English journal of traditional Chinese veterinary medicine (TCVM) was realized during an informal chat in a university hallway. It was 2005 and research of the basic science and clinical applications of TCVM had been published in China for more than 25 years. Since it was published in Chinese, most English veterinarians were unaware of the research or had no access to the information. Further, English TCVM researchers were also having difficulty publishing their findings in conventional veterinary journals, because most publishers and veterinarians did not understand the TCVM paradigm, subject matter and terms. An idea began to take shape for a journal that would contain research from around the world and become a source of continuing education and other information specifically for TCVM practitioners. No other such journal was available in English. There was already a Chinese publication called the Journal of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine, so even though an international journal was envisioned, the name the American Journal of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (AJTCVM) was adopted.

The initial AJTCVM founders consisted of 6 veterinarians trained in TCVM: Cheryl Chrisman, Bruce Ferguson, Caroline Ortiz-Umpierre (Medina), Lisa Trevisanello, Huisheng Xie and Madeline Yamate. A description of the new journal was approved by the United States International Standard Book agency and international book standard numbers (ISBN) for print and electronic versions were assigned. The AJTCVM founders also drafted a mission statement, instructions to authors, copyright agreement and selected 24 advisory board members from TCVM veterinarians and researchers around the world. The Table of Contents was envisioned to contain an Editorial, TCVM News Around the World, Original Scientific Reports, Reviews, Clinical Case Studies, Pearls from TCVM Practice, TCVM Notes, Herbal Materia Medica, Abstracts and Classified Advertisements.

As with most new endeavors, the financial realities of creating a journal soon became very apparent. Although journal manpower was initially composed of unpaid volunteers, there were still the expenses of printing, binding and mailing. To acquire a financial base for journal publication and support the needs of the growing number of TCVM veterinarians, the American Association of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (AATCVM) was formed as a non-profit organization to promote TCVM worldwide. Unlike the mission statements of existing organizations at the time, the AATCVM included acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Tui-na and Food Therapy with a focus on the TCVM paradigm of medicine. The AJTCVM would be the official journal of the AATCVM and dues from membership and advertising...
sales would be used to support the journal.

Hiring a professional publishing company was prohibitively expensive, so the only feasible way to create a TCVM journal was to self-publish. There had been a recent ruling concerning medical data bases, however, that favored professional publishing companies and made it difficult for self-published journals to successfully attract high quality research articles. If one of the professional companies published a journal, there would be automatic inclusion in the prestigious databases of the Thomson Reuters Science Citation Index (SCI) and the United States National Institutes of Health Library of Medicine (PubMed, MEDLINE). For self-published journals there would be an arduous application process that would take 3-5 years for consideration for inclusion in these databases. Chinese researchers must publish in an SCI approved journal in order to receive an advanced degree or achieve recognition of their work.

Other researchers, especially at universities, had to publish in known prestigious journals included in MEDLINE databases for successful promotion and tenure decisions. There was little incentive, however, for researchers to submit articles to an unknown and unproven journal not yet SCI or MEDLINE approved.

The challenge then became to attract enough high-quality TCVM articles to create a journal that would pass the review boards for SCI and MEDLINE inclusion. The AJTCVM Executive Director obtained some articles as a favor from established research colleagues in China. Most had limited English so their translated versions became an editing challenge, but the result was 8 Chinese translated articles acceptable for the first 2 AJTCVM issues (Volume 1, Number 1, Fall of 2006 and Volume 2, Number 1 Summer of 2007). Other veterinarians that contributed to the first 2 AJTCVM issues included: Drs. Cheryl Chrisman, Connie Clemons-Chevis, Lisa Donato, Christine Egger, Bruce Ferguson, Lindsey Harris, A. Elizabeth Hershey, Carolina Ortiz-Umpierre (Medina), Carla Pasteur, Narda Robinson, Allen Schoen, Cheryl Schwartz, Are Thoresen, Tangjitjaroen Weerapongse and Huisheng Xie. Dr. Lisa Travisenello expertly performed the journal layout and Yanru Zhao and Zhen Zhao coordinated the printing and mailing. To generate interest and eventually paid subscriptions, over 4,000 copies of the 2006 and 2007 AJTCVM issues were mailed free of charge to veterinarians.

By 2008, the number of scientific article submissions and paid memberships had grown enough that publication frequency increased to 2 AJTCVM issues/year in February and August. Increased publication frequency required a reorganization and expansion of the AJTCVM staff into Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editors and Assistant Editors along with graphic design, advertising, webmaster, IT support and subscription departments. A Board of prestigious scientific reviewers was added. By 2010 interactive websites for the AATCVM and AJTCVM had been created through the tireless efforts of Dr. Lindsey Wedemeyer, along with the support of Zhen Zhao of the Chi Institute. The AATCVM and AJTCVM websites and inclusion of abstracts from AJTCVM articles in the EBSCOhost research databases did much to enhance the international presence, growth of memberships and financial independence of the journal. The initial 2 applications for inclusion of AJTCVM abstracts in SCI and PubMed databases were rejected due to the low number of original research articles (the “catch 22” of not being SCI and Medline approved) and few citations of AJTCVM articles in the literature, because of the low numbers of people doing TCVM research.

Over the past 10 years, the quality and reputation of the AJTCVM have continued to improve, evidenced by an increase in international contributions and adoption by other related organizations. Basic science researchers and clinical investigators from 16 different countries have contributed research and clinical articles including: Australia, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Germany, Honduras, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Turkey and the United States. The AJTCVM also became the official journal of the American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture (AAVA) in 2011 and the World Association of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (WATCVM) in 2014. Over 50 veterinarians, physicians, PhDs and support staff contribute to the production of AJTCVM. Some of their names can be seen on the initial page of each issue, while others work behind the scenes. Under the leadership of Dr. Judy Saik, the Editor-in-Chief as of 2014, the AJTCVM continues to successfully fulfill its mission to provide the TCVM community with the highest level of peer reviewed articles on veterinary acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Tui-na and Food Therapy. As well, the AJTCVM continues to promote the generation and publication of these therapies in animals to support the practice of evidence-based TCVM. The long-term goal for a quarterly journal can be realized in the future as membership in TCVM and related organizations grow and scientific submissions and citations increase with SCI and Medline database approval. The AJTCVM can re-apply for review in 3 years. Thank you all for contributing to the success of the first TCVM journal published in English, through submission of articles, production activities, memberships and readership as the AJTCVM perseveres and continues to grow over the next 10 years.