

Stroke patient records help evaluate need for Integrative Medicine

May 28 2014, by Victoria Hollick

Hong Kong's Prince of Wales Hospital has enlisted two University of Sydney information technologies researchers to examine why post-stroke patients are drawn to integrative medicine - a combination of western and Chinese therapies.

Drs Simon Poon and Josiah Poon, authorities in IT-based bioinformatics will assist a multi-disciplinary team of neuroscientists and clinicians to investigate integrative medical practises.

The pair will use [data mining techniques](#) to explore the clinical and hospital records of more than 10,000 acute-stroke patients from the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical School and Hong Kong Prince of Wales Hospital.

"The first 3 to 6 months post-stroke is considered a vital phase of rehabilitation, new information on the behaviour patterns of post-stroke patients can assist in the design of recovery options for of these patients" says Dr Simon Poon, senior lecturer in health informatics, School of Information Technologies.

The current length-of-stay for a stroke patient in a Hong Kong hospital is approximately three weeks during which time their treatment consists of acute western [medicine](#) (WM) therapies and early rehabilitation such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy.

"However there is an increasing trend observed in clinical practice where

patients and their relatives actively seek Chinese medicine treatments, including acupuncture and herbal medication, as adjunctive therapies to WM," states Dr Simon Poon.

It is more common for stroke patients to take Chinese medicine in the recovery and sequelae stage, the herbs that are commonly used are: Radix Astragali, Pheretima, and Radix et Rhizoma Salviae Miltiorrhizae.

Despite the seemingly widespread support for combined-WM-CM therapies Hong Kong based hospitals do not offer integrative medical treatment for stroke patients.

"Through this project we hope to reveal information buried deep within the massive clinical and textual datasets found in hospital and healthcare clinics, information that will show us when and what type of CMs are being used by [stroke patients](#)," says Dr Josiah Poon, also from the University's School of Information technologies.

"We will compare the clinical records of the [patients](#) who have elected to use Chinese medicine as additional therapies with those who have only taken western therapies. We will also compare patient readmission rates."

"The data mining techniques will allow us to uncover which type of Chinese medicines are commonly used alongside WM," he says.

Another important research aim of the project is to study drug-herb interactions.

"This kind of research can help confirm diagnostic-treatments as evidence-based, not just an ancient philosophy or subjective assessment," states Dr Josiah Poon.

Results of the study will assist Hong Kong's Hospital Authority to evaluate its approaches to use of [integrative medicine](#) in stroke-patient care.

Provided by University of Sydney

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