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Traditional Chinese Herbal Sciences courses: detailed curriculum

Introductory and intermediate Chinese (TCM) herbology education: detailed curriculum, course outline, credit-hours.

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For courses completed prior to 2003, see archived [curriculum through year 2002](#).

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Overview

Beginning in 2003, the Supervised Self-Study Course comprises the foundation for advanced education in clinical Chinese herbal sciences and supercedes the core courses that had been in the curriculum from 1992 to 2002 at RMHI. The [HerbalThink-TCM](#) (self-study reference and self-quizzing software) allows each course participant to progress at his or her own pace until mastering basic theory and definitions necessary for further study.

The current curriculum now includes:

- C100 (Level 1): Supervised Self-Study Course: Foundations of Traditional Chinese Herbal Science;
estimated completion time = 778 hours
- C200 (Level 2): Supervised Clinical Studies and Cases;
estimated homework and study time = 150 hours
- C300.x (Level 3): Clinical Seminar in TCM Herbology;
in-class time = 60 hours each seminar
- C400: Comprehensive and Practical Exam;
estimated completion time = 200 hours

estimated completion time = 300 hours

Estimated times for completion of homework series are based upon student surveys.

C100 (Level 1): Supervised Self-Study Course: Foundations of Traditional Chinese Herbal Science

Estimated homework and study time = 778 hours

Required texts:

- Wicke, R.W. and Kruse, C.J. [*HerbalThink-TCM*](#) (self-study reference and self-testing software). Hot Springs, Montana: Rocky Mountain Herbal Institute; c1992-2004.
- Maciocia, Giovanni; *Tongue Diagnosis in Chinese Medicine*; Eastland Press, Seattle, c1995.

Format: This software-based Course allows course participants to study at home at their own pace, yet receive detailed feedback from both the self-quizzing software and by participating in an Internet distance-learning forum. Self-quizzing software interactively monitors and displays a user's progress, progressively introducing and recommending new material as appropriate. Successful completion requires achieving minimum target scores as recorded in the user's progress file.

Topics covered:

- **TCM theory and health assessment:** TCM philosophy, comparison with western modes of scientific thought; the Eight Principle Patterns (Entities); the Fundamental Processes of Qi, Blood, Jing, Shen, Fluids; the Six Pernicious Factors; Organ Disharmonies; Acute Feverish Illnesses (Shang Han and Wen Bing); tongue inspection; pulse palpation; principles of case analysis. (TCM health assessment is based on a system of symptom-sign pattern recognition and an evaluation of what would be called "metabolic profile" in western terms; the theory is complementary to and consistent with an understanding of physiology and pathology.)
- **Materia medica:** principles of herb classification and correspondence between TCM health assessment (patterns of disharmony) and classification of herbal properties; choosing herbs to counteract specific disharmonies; principles of classification of herbs by primary clinical function; clinical herbal strategies; 200 of the most commonly used herbs in the TCM pharmacopoeia; taste and nature, Organ/meridian classification, clinical functions, dosage, contraindications, selected physiological actions, ordering information and quality control, toxicity calculations (LD50). Misc topics: herbal research and critique of experimental design; problems in evaluating professional literature, commercial promotional material, and advertising claims; reading between the lines.
- **Herbal formulation:** classification of herbal formulas by function; overview of major categories of formulas; choosing formulas to match primary clinical strategy; refining an herbal formula to match secondary aspects of a clinical case and adjusting dosage.
- **Misc:** diet, nutrition, environmental health issues, legal issues for herbalists, doing Internet

searches, evaluating the trustworthiness of information sources, historical and political issues affecting herbalists.

C200 (Level 2): Supervised Clinical Studies and Cases

Estimated homework and study time = 150 hours

Required textbooks: [HerbalThink-TCM](#) (self-study reference and self-quizzing software)

Format: To be completed are:

- 15 personal case studies/analyses of friends, family, or clients; each written case record to include health histories, dietary and environmental health assessments, recommended herbal formulas, and at least one followup report.
- Active participation in an online discussion group for enrolled RMHI students and graduates.
- Completion of assigned clinical case problems. These problems introduce students to techniques for analyzing complex cases characterized by multiple syndromes or patterns.

C300.x (Level 3): Clinical Seminar

In-class time = 60 hours each seminar

Required textbooks: [HerbalThink-TCM](#) (self-study reference and self-quizzing software)

Format: One-week seminar; full days including several evening lectures. Candidates for certification may enroll in this seminar multiple times, as primary focus of seminar is clinical practice on different individuals each seminar. Most of the seminar time consists of demonstrating how TCM assessments lead to correct herb choices: practice analyzing local volunteers and course participants, palpating pulses, inspecting tongues, taking health histories. The instructor discusses how these results are interpreted to determine an herbal strategy and a choice of herbs to resolve the primary disharmonies.

Topics covered: Clinical practice in pulse analysis, tongue assessment, case history taking and analysis, choosing herbs and tailoring formulas to individual needs, numerical methods for analyzing complex cases, diet and environmental health counseling, use of music from a TCM perspective to help resolve disharmonies involving mental/emotional aspects, legal and ethical issues in being an herbalist, introduction to plant taxonomy, discussion of clinical research methods, office procedure, handling herbal inventory.

C400, Advanced Comprehensive and Practical Exam

Estimated homework and study time = 300 hours

Required textbooks: [HerbalThink-TCM](#) (self-study reference and self-quizzing software)

This course comprises continued self-study using the HerbalThink-TCM software, focusing on

... This course comprises continued self-study, using the HerbalThink-TCM software, reading an expanded knowledge of the materia medica (300 herbs) and classical herbal formulas, plus completion of a practical exam to be administered at an on-site seminar (see C300.x, above). The practical exam will include examination of pulse and tongue of several unknown individuals; the examinee will be required to complete a TCM assessment based on this information.

- Continued self-study using the HerbalThink-TCM software, focusing on expanded knowledge of the materia medica (300 herbs) and classical herbal formulas
- Completion of a practical exam to be administered at an on-site seminar (see C300.x, above). The practical exam will include examination of pulse and tongue of several unknown individuals; the examinee will be required to complete a TCM assessment based on this information.
- Continued active participation in online discussion group for enrolled RMHI students and graduates.

