INTRODUCTION

Healing the sick is the job of professionally-trained doctors. They practise medicine, which is the science concerned with treating and preventing diseases and preserving health.¹

Doctors have to be registered with a governing institution and abide by a set of professional ethics and codes of conduct. In Singapore, the Singapore Medical Council has the role of ensuring doctors abide by the Ethical Code to maintain the highest standards of professional practice and conduct.²

According to the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines, “a doctor shall provide competent, compassionate and appropriate care to his patient”.

This edition of Cheat Sheet is intended to provide a brief overview of healing and some forms of alternative treatments in modern times, as well as some forms of treatments used in the primitive age. The examples cited here are for information only and readers’ discretion is advised. Likewise, do question the validity of information posted on the Internet and social media sites, and seek professional advice from your doctor.

SOME FACTS & FIGURES

- There are 9 public hospitals in Singapore (‘SGH, NUH, CGH, TTSH, KTPH, AH, KKH, IMH and NTFGH).³
- There are 11,733 doctors in Singapore (as of 2014).³
- The doctor to population ratio in Singapore is 1 for every 470 people.³
- Since 2013, there are about 300 new medical graduates every year in Singapore.⁴

HIGHLIGHTS OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

There are various types of doctors who specialise in treating different medical conditions.³ Some of the specialists include:

- **Pediatricians**: care and treat babies and children
- **Cardiologists**: care and treat heart diseases
- **Ophthalmologists**: specialise in eye diseases
- **Gerontologists**: care for the ageing
- **Orthopedists**: concerned with the bones and skeletal system
- **Dermatologists**: deal with skin, nails, hair and their diseases

¹Singapore General Hospital, National University Hospital, Changi General Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Alexandra Hospital, KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital, Institute of Mental Health and Ng Teng Fong General Hospital

²Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines

³As of 2014

⁴Since 2013
Before the development of modern science, early humans did not have the knowledge to treat illnesses. They often attributed them to spirits and demons. Ways of treatment back then included:

### PRIMITIVE MEDICINE

*The act of drilling a hole in the skull to let the “bad spirits” or disease out.*

### CONVENTIONAL VS. ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

**CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE**

Based on scientific knowledge of the body. The medical treatments have been proven effective through scientific research.

**ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE**

Based on the belief that a medical care provider has to treat the whole person — body, mind and spirit.

### SOME FORMS OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE PRACTISED AROUND THE WORLD:

1. **TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM)**
   - Origin: China
   - Known for emphasizing the traditional concept of Yin (cold) and Yang (hot)
   - Common practices: Acupuncture and use of herbal medicine

2. **AYURVEDA (“THE SCIENCE OF LIFE” IN SANSKRIT)**
   - Origin: India
   - Based on the tenets of the Hindu religion
   - Common practices: Yoga and massage

3. **HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE**
   - Origin: Germany
   - Based on two principles:
     i. Disease can be cured by a substance that produces similar symptoms in healthy people
     ii. The lower the dose of medication, the greater its effectiveness
   - Common practices: Treating runny nose with *Allium cepa* (red onion)

### ACCEPTANCE OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

There have been various forms of encouragement for alternative medicine.

In 2001, the World Health Organisation (WHO) called for traditional medicine to be integrated into mainstream health services in the Asia-Pacific region.

In 2015, Tu Youyou won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discovering a substance found in a traditional Chinese medicinal herb, which can be used against malaria.

In Singapore, TCM is developing positively.

**Ministry of Health (MOH)** has introduced a TCM Clinical Research Grant to encourage local TCM clinical research.

**Singapore Athletics** signed a one-year deal worth $280,000 with a TCM company to treat strains and aches.

As of 2014, there are:
- 2,199 practising TCM physicians
- 153 registered and active acupuncturists

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Source: [S.U.R.E.](https://www.nlbc.gov.sg/sure)
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**REFERENCES:**