

# A Position Paper on Terminology: A Personal Perspective From A Professor Of Herbal Medicine

By Z'ev Rosenberg LAc



Chinese medical terminology has challenged many students and practitioners who are not proficient in the Chinese language. The small percentage of translated Chinese medical texts

lack consistency in medical terminology. This inconsistency is confusing to students and practitioners learning Chinese medicine. Translating Chinese texts into English is a difficult task. The two common methods of translation are source based and target based translation.

Source based translations reflect an idea the ancient physicians in China had envisioned and captures the essence behind the term. In contrast, target based translations immediately convert an ancient concept into a common Western medical term. This method often skips over the intricacies of these ancient concepts and confines it to a single word and pathology. This can distract

practitioners from making an accurate diagnosis and proper treatment based on Chinese medical theory.

One consistent authority on Chinese medical terminology is the *Practical Dictionary of Chinese Medicine*, by Nigel Wiseman and Feng Ye. It was the first comprehensive dictionary in the English language that consistently matched Chinese language dictionaries. A change needs to be made to avoid future confusion among students, practitioners, and translators. The use of the *Practical Dictionary of Chinese Medicine* is one step to providing consistent translations of Chinese medical texts.

Another solution would be to adopt an open standard form of translation. This would provide both a target based translation and a source based translation for each medical term when available. Standardization of Chinese medical textbook material or cross-referenced glossaries to accurately teach and communicate information may also alleviate confusion around medical

terminology. These suggestions may provide a clearer path to understanding Chinese medicine.

**Key words:** target based translation, source based translation, terminology.

**Note:** The full position paper submitted by Dr. Rosenberg can be accessed online at [www.aacom.org](http://www.aacom.org).

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