

Investigation of the Status Quo of the Inheritance of the Red Doctor's Spirit among Medical Students

—Taking Jingtangshan University as an Example

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How to cite this paper: Wang, W. Y., & Hu, S. S. (2025). Investigation of the Status Quo of the Inheritance of the Red Doctor's Spirit among Medical Students. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 13, 314-321.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2025.131019>

Received: December 27, 2024

Accepted: January 20, 2025

Published: January 23, 2025

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Abstract

The red doctor's spirit was a valuable spiritual philosophy fashioned by the Chinese Communist Party for the practice of medical and health care during the revolutionary war years. The inheritance and propagation of the red doctor's spirit are of great practical significance to the healthy development of the Chinese socialist medical and health cause. To grasp the current status of the red doctor's spirit among medical students, we conducted a questionnaire survey of 252 medical students at Jingtangshan University. The results showed that most of the students understood the meaning of the red doctor's spirit, believed that it was necessary to learn and inherit the red doctor's spirit, and had a strong willingness to practice the red doctor's spirit. However, the students also identified some problems with the teaching of that spirit. Therefore, this paper proposes several measures for addressing the existing challenges in the education of the red doctor's spirit.

Keywords

Red Doctor's Spirit, Red Medicine, Red Health, Inheritance, Investigation Study

1. Introduction

In the summer of 1928, the Red Army, led by Mao Zedong, founded the Xiaojing Red Army Hospital in Jingtang Mountains, the first formal hospital in the history of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. In November 1931, the China Workers' and Peasants' Red Army Medical School began to be built in Ruijin, Jiangxi

Province, which was the first medical school founded by the Communist Party of China. Mao Zedong formulated the school's policy of "training politically firm and technically excellent red doctors" (Liu & Liu, 2022; Li, 2024). Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the majority of personnel in the practice of medical and health care in the revolutionary war era gradually established the red doctor's spirit, which connotes "political steadfastness, saving lives and helping the injured, hard work, and excellent technology" (Liu et al., 2024).

The red doctor's spirit was forged in the arduous revolutionary struggle, when medical personnel, despite a scarcity of supplies and under perilous conditions, steadfastly adhered to their posts, saving lives and aiding the wounded. This reflects their unwavering political beliefs, indomitable will to struggle, and profound humanitarian sentiments. In modern medical education, it is crucial not only to cultivate solid professional knowledge and skills among medical students but also to shape their correct professional values. The red doctor's spirit, which emphasizes loyalty to the party and dedication to the people, can guide students to establish noble medical ideals, enabling them to persevere in the face of difficulties and move forward. This aligns with the goal of educating students to overcome medical challenges and serve patients' health needs by laying a solid ideological foundation. In medical professional practice, when doctors encounter the complexities of diagnosing and treating difficult and rare diseases, they must draw upon the tenacity of revolutionary forefathers to study and explore solutions. When serving in areas with relatively scarce healthcare resources, they should inherit the tradition of hard work and perseverance to overcome challenging conditions. Additionally, the red doctor's spirit advocates for humanistic care, fostering a harmonious doctor-patient relationship and enhancing the quality of healthcare services.

The inheritance and propagation of the red doctor's spirit is of great practical significance for promoting the healthy development of Chinese socialist health care. The red doctor's spirit enhances China's cultural soft power, continuously promotes the prosperity of Chinese socialist culture in the new era, and realizes the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Zhong, 2023). To better promote the red doctor's spirit, we administered a questionnaire survey to medical students at Jinggangshan University. Our goal was to explore the inheritance of red doctor's spirit as exemplified in medical students' recognition of the red doctor's spirit.

2. Methods

2.1. Purpose of the Survey and Object of the Study

This study had a dual aim: to comprehend the current state of contemporary medical students' inheritance of the red doctor's spirit and to propose measures to strengthen the teaching of that spirit. Convenience sampling method was employed to recruit undergraduate students from the Jinggangshan University Health Science Center as participants. Medical students on campus were approached at the entrance of the teaching building and invited to partake in the

survey, completing the questionnaire on site. Of those medical students, 252 students completed the survey, 94 of which were male and 158 female. Sixty-four (64) of the students were in Grade 1, 31 in Grade 2, 81 in Grade 3, 43 in Grade 4, and 33 in Grade 5. With respect to their majors, 50 students were majoring in clinical medicine, 73 in preventive medicine, 18 in traditional Chinese medicine, 16 in dental medicine, 47 in nursing, 23 in rehabilitation therapy, and 25 in pharmacy.

2.2. Implementation of the Survey

The questionnaire on the current state of medical students' inheritance of the red doctor's spirit consisted of five parts: general situation, knowledge of the red doctor's spirit, degree of identification with the spirit, willingness to practice the spirit, and suggestions for improving the teaching of the spirit. The survey was conducted from June 1, 2023, to June 15, 2023, using the professional platform Wenjuanxing to collect data from the undergraduate students enrolled in the Jinggangshan University Health Science Center.

2.3. Statistical Analyses

The data were automatically exported by Wenjuanxing, statistically analyzed using SPSS software version 25.0.

3. Results

3.1. Awareness of the Red Doctor's Spirit

With respect to their awareness of the red doctor's spirit, 11.9% of the medical students self-reported that they knew a lot, 74.6% reported that they knew a little, and 13.5% knew nothing. The questionnaire posed the following question to test the students' mastery of the meaning of the red doctor's spirit: "Which of the following do you think does not belong to the connotation of the red doctor's spirit? Political firmness, saving lives and helping the injured, hard work, avoiding arrogance, and technical excellence." A total of 57.9% of the medical students answered correctly.

3.2. Degree of Recognition of the Red Doctor's Spirit

The questionnaire posed two questions to investigate the degree to which medical students recognized the red doctor's spirit in their education. First, the survey asked, "Do you think it is necessary for medical students to learn the knowledge related to the Red Doctor's Spirit?" According to the results, 59.9% of the medical students thought it was very necessary, 37.7% thought it was necessary, and 2.4% thought it was unnecessary or could not say. Second, the survey asked, "Do you think it is necessary to inherit and carry forward the Red Doctor's Spirit in the new era?" According to the results, 61.9% of the medical students thought it was very necessary, 37.3% thought it was necessary, and 0.8% thought it was unnecessary or could not say.

3.3. Willingness to Practice the Red Doctor's Spirit

The questionnaire posed two questions investigating the willingness of medical students to practice the red doctor's spirit. As shown in **Table 1**, most medical students had a strong willingness to practice the red doctor's spirit.

Table 1. Willingness of medical students to practice the red doctor's spirit.

Questions	Options	n	%
1. What would you do if there was a major outbreak of an unknown cause in a city?	(1) Took the initiative to apply to go to the front line of the fight against the epidemic.	73	30.0
	(2) Stick to your current position and be willing to be redeployed.	170	67.4
	(3) Stick to your current position and don't want to be reassigned.	7	2.8
	(4) Will not continue in the medical profession.	2	0.8
2. What would you do if you met someone injured in a traffic accident?	(1) Administer first aid immediately.	145	57.5
	(2) Offering help but not administering first aid.	105	41.7
	(3) Fear of trouble, choose to spectate or leave.	2	0.8

3.4. Problems and Suggestions for the Education of Red Doctor's Spirit

Finally, the questionnaire posed one single-choice question, one multiple-choice question, and one open-ended question about problems with and possible improvements in the teaching of the red doctor's spirit. According to the medical students, the main problem with the current propagation and teaching of the red doctor's spirit is that theory and practice are not integrated. Furthermore, the students believe that the best way to teach the red doctor's spirit is through red tourism, as shown in **Table 2**. The students suggested a number of approaches to cultivating and promoting the red doctor's spirit, which included the following: "more study activities should be carried out," "organizing knowledge contests on the red doctor's spirit," "should be integrated with new media," etc.

Table 2. Problems and suggestions for the education of red doctor's spirit.

Questions	Options	n	%
1. What do you think are the current problems in the education of the Red Doctor's Spirit in schools? (Multiple choice question)	(1) Lack of theoretical education.	85	33.7
	(2) Poor practical education.	158	62.7
	(3) Theory and practice are not well integrated.	165	65.5
	(4) Lack of vivid cases.	135	53.6
	(5) General lack of attention.	37	14.7
	(6) Other.	16	6.4
2. What do you think is the best way to educate about the Red Doctor's Spirit?	(1) Classroom Learning.	55	21.8
	(2) Books and magazines.	4	1.6
	(3) Online media.	29	11.5
	(4) Communist Party activities.	42	16.7
	(5) Red tourism.	115	45.6

Continued

(6) Friends and family.	2	0.8
(7) Other.	5	2.0

4. Discussion

Jinggangshan University is one of the first universities in China to include content on the red doctor's spirit. Specifically, "Introduction to Red Health Culture" is a compulsory course for medical students offered in their second semester after enrollment. The course covers the meaning and characteristics of the red doctor's spirit, its historical origins, its evolutionary trajectory, and its contemporaneous values. The respondents in this study had taken the course, but the results showed that 13.5% of them still did not know very much about the red doctor's spirit. Furthermore, 42.1% of the medical students could not correctly explain the meaning of the red doctor's spirit. Within this context, the survey respondents identified several problems with the teaching of the red doctor's spirit and suggested various solutions.

4.1. Analysis of the Reasons for Some Students' Resistance to Learning and Practicing the Red Doctor's Spirit

There are several reasons why some students may resist learning and practicing the red doctor's spirit. First, cognitive bias plays a significant role. Some students perceive the red doctor's spirit merely as historical memory, failing to recognize its profound significance in guiding contemporary medical studies and future career development. This perception creates a disconnect between the red doctor's spirit and modern medical advancements, leading to a lack of motivation for learning. Second, the influence of social trends contributes to this resistance. In an era where personal achievement and economic returns are highly valued, some students overlook the selfless dedication and social responsibility that are integral to the red doctor's spirit. Third, limited practice opportunities hinder students' engagement. Although schools advocate for practicing the red doctor's spirit, the availability of platforms such as community medical services and grassroots support is restricted. Consequently, students' enthusiasm may wane over time due to the lack of practical experience. Finally, academic pressure poses a constraint. The heavy workload of medical courses leaves students with little time to focus on activities related to the red doctor's spirit. Even when they do participate, it is often superficial, making it difficult to deeply internalize the spirit's core values.

4.2. Recommendations to Address the Issues Revealed by the Survey**4.2.1. Integration of Educational Resources to Enhance Medical Students' Awareness of the Red Doctor's Spirit**

On the one hand, the top-level design of the curriculum should be improved to organically integrate traditional and contemporary educational resources concerning the red doctor's spirit. The red doctor's spirit is taught later in the

curriculum, typically using a single educational resource. For example, at Jinggangshan University, the course on the red doctor's spirit mainly relies on the textbook *Introduction to Red Health Culture*; there is a lack of other resources. One recommendation is to explore the Internet in depth, fully utilizing Internet resources to create more diversified teaching cases, which not only saves the cost of resources but also improves the level of teaching and management. On the other hand, the top-level design of the curriculum should actively integrate the ideology of the red doctor's spirit. The red doctor's spirit is of great significance to contemporary medical education. Therefore, its integration is important for the innovative development of a medical course ideology, which is an inevitable requirement for developing Chinese socialist medical and health care in the new era (Ye, 2021; Liu et al., 2019). By incorporating material concerning the manifestation of the red doctor's spirit in the health work of China into the curriculum, medical students' knowledge of the red doctor's spirit can be further enhanced.

4.2.2. Enriching the Form of Education to Enhance Medical Students' Recognition of the Red Doctor's Spirit

This survey found that classroom learning alone cannot fully educate medical students on the red doctor's spirit; rather, that form of education should be further enriched. Specifically, studies have shown that diverse educational forms can effectively improve teaching outcomes (Cai et al., 2024; Wei & Liu, 2024). Based on the responses of the research subjects, we recommend that the red doctor's spirit also be taught using alternate forms of education. For example, artistic events exemplifying the red doctor's spirit, including cultural performances, exhibitions of literary works, etc., can be organized. Similarly, knowledge and skills competitions focusing on the red doctor's spirit can be held, creating an atmosphere that facilitates learning and fully reflects that spirit. In addition, the red doctor's spirit should be actively integrated into the campus culture of medical schools.

4.2.3. Strengthening Practical Education and Communist Party Education to Promote Medical Students' Willingness to Practice the Red Doctor's Spirit

As identified in this survey, the main problem with the teaching of the red doctor's spirit is the practice of that spirit, which is weak. Correspondingly, the solution suggested most often by the research participants was to carry out more practical activities. Practical education must be strengthened, as it is an important means of promoting students' willingness to practice the red doctor's spirit. Specifically, studies have shown that practical education can effectively improve the effectiveness of moral education in colleges and universities (Zhao & Li, 2024; Qiu, 2024). Therefore, we recommend that more practical activities be conducted. For example, social practice activities focusing on the red doctor's spirit can be organized, as well as activities that propagate cultural and research activities related to the red doctor's spirit. In addition, volunteer activities that emphasize the red doctor's spirit can be organized, through the Rural Social Practice Activities (named "Three Down to the Countryside"), community clinics, Red Cross first aid

training, and other public welfare activities, to strengthen social awareness of the selfless dedication of medical students.

At the same time, encouraging medical students to actively participate in the Communist Party's educational and practical activities is also a necessary means of promoting their willingness to practice the red doctor's spirit. The present survey found that 31.3% (10/32) of the medical students who identified as Communist Party members indicated that they would take the initiative to apply to the front line when there is a major epidemic with unknown causes. Furthermore, 59.4% (19/32) of the Communist students indicated that they would take the initiative to help the injured in traffic accidents. Both percentages are higher than the proportion of the medical students with a general political profile, suggesting that active participation in the Communist Party's educational activities can promote the willingness to practice the spirit of the red doctor.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge all the study participants who took part in this survey. This work was supported by Social Science Planning Program of Ji'an City (grant number 23GHA665) and Jiangxi Provincial Natural Science Foundation (grant number 20232BAB206143).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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