COMMUNICATION

Professor Zaifang Jiang: Great doctor in pediatric respiratory medicine in China

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Professor Zaifang Jiang was the chairperson of the 10th and 11th boards of the Chinese Pediatrics Society. She was a member of the standing committee and executive committee of the International Pediatric Association, chairperson of the 23rd International Congress of Pediatrics, and a member of the standing committee of the Asian Society for Pediatric Research.

Good student
Professor Jiang was born in Beijing in May 1926. In 1943, she was enrolled at Peking University School of Medicine and achieved excellent examination results. When she graduated from the university in 1949, she joined Peking Private Children’s Hospital (predecessor of Beijing Children’s Hospital) as one of the best students in her grade.

Doctoral candidate in Soviet Union for fighting pediatric tuberculosis
Supported by the Chinese government, Jiang in 1955 became a doctoral candidate at First Moscow State Medical University, which was the best medical school in the former Soviet Union. Pneumonia was her main research interest. However, the prevalence and mortality of tuberculosis were extremely high among Chinese children, and medical specialists in that field were urgently needed. Accordingly, Jiang transferred to the Institute of Tuberculosis under the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences to receive training in pediatric tuberculosis.

FIGURE 1 Photograph of Professor Zaifang Jiang

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Jiang’s research area was anti-tuberculosis drugs and the use of adrenal cortex hormones to treat pediatric tuberculosis. In 1959, Jiang successfully made a rigorous defense of her thesis and obtained a deputy doctor degree in medicine. After returning to China, she founded the Pediatric Tuberculosis Program at Beijing Children’s Hospital. She was the first physician in China to use adrenal cortex hormones to treat pediatric tuberculosis; that move greatly reduced the mortality rate of tuberculosis (especially tuberculous meningitis) in children. She proposed the use of lateral ventricular drainage as an auxiliary technique for treating tuberculous meningitis with hydrocephalus. That technique is still widely applied in China.

**Pioneer in development of pediatrics in China**

In 1963, Jiang was sent to work at the Tongxian County Tuberculosis Institute in Beijing. In 1977, Jiang returned to Beijing Children’s Hospital. In January 1980, she went to the United States for further training as a member of the first group of visiting scholars selected by the central government after Chinese economic reform. In 1985, Jiang served as director of Beijing Institute of Pediatrics and chief of the Department of Internal Medicine. As a pioneer in pediatric medicine in China, Jiang set up the Connective Tissue Disease Research Laboratory, Pediatric Fiber Bronchoscopy Laboratory, Microbiology Laboratory, Human Leukocyte Genetics Research Laboratory, Pediatric Nutrition Laboratory, and Radio-immunity Center.

Jiang’s research interest was respiratory diseases—in particular the etiology of pediatric adenovirus pneumonia, bacterial pneumonia, and bronchial asthma. She has guided her graduate students in conducting studies on group B streptococcal infection in children, the etiology of *Haemophilus influenzae* pneumonia, and drug-resistant bacterial strains and epidemics. Jiang was the first specialist in China to apply fiberoptic bronchoscopy in the diagnosis and treatment of respiratory diseases in children.

Jiang was one of the editors-in-chief of the sixth to eighth editions of *Zhu Futang Practice of Pediatrics*, which is regarded as the pediatrician’s bible in China.

With her rich clinical experiences and rigorous scholarship, Jiang has taken the lead in diagnosing many rare respiratory diseases. Her ideas and practices in managing such diseases have been increasingly recognized by Chinese pediatricians and saved the lives of countless children.

**Good mentor**

Yonghong Yang, one of Jiang’s master’s students, focused his research on bacteria. He has successfully applied for over a dozen scientific research grants including the National Key Technologies R&D Program of China during the period of the Ninth Five-Year Plan and the National Natural Science Foundation. Yang has achieved extensive results. Xicheng Liu, another master’s student of Jiang, took the lead in applying fiberoptic bronchoscopy in clinical settings in China. Jiang has trained 24 master’s students, 16 doctoral students, and one postdoctoral student; many of them became academic leaders, experts with outstanding contribution, doctoral tutors, and master’s tutors.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None.

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