

Precision medicine summit held in Shenzhen



James Watson delivers a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 2017 Shenzhen International Precision Medicine Summit on April 6.
[Photo/China.org.cn]

Chinese universities, research institutes and companies are seeking synergy in their efforts to harness the nascent field of precision medicine that uses genomic, physiological and other data to tailor treatments to individuals in fighting deadly diseases.

Around 1,000 representatives from Chinese and overseas academic and business circles gathered in the southern city of Shenzhen to discuss the prospects for the future of life sciences and healthcare industries at the 2017 International Precision Medicine Summit April 6-7.

In a congratulatory letter to the event, Chen Zhu, former health minister and a famed biologist, said the emergence and rapid development of precision medicine offered new opportunities for healthcare development with strong hopes of being able to conquer various deadly diseases.

China has made precision medicine a focus of its 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), and various companies are engaged in ambitious efforts to collect a vast trove of genetic and health data, researching how to identify cancer markers in the blood, and launch consumer technologies tapping the potentially lifesaving information.

“Fresh advances in human genome sequencing brought about by breakthroughs in

biochip and protein technology, as well as improvement in molecular imaging, surgery navigation, minimal invasive technology and big data analysis also provide new opportunities for precision medicine,” Chen said.

Speaking of treating deadly diseases, James Watson, the visiting Nobel laureate for his co-discovery of the DNA double helix, was disappointed that cancer mortality hasn’t seen little change in the past 40 years, saying that “most cancer patients still suffer and die.”

“Given the wealth and all the devotion from society, China could be the No.1 or No.2 science-based nation in the world within the next 50 years if it can spend money wisely, create good institutions and encourage individual science projects,” Dr. Watson told China.org.cn.

He predicted the next great scientific discovery could be made in China if the country created a stronger pro-science environment to promote research.

He calls the country to mobilize its huge strength that could lead to a quick and inexpensive cure for deadly diseases.

The Nobel prize-winner was credited as the principal science consultant with the CheerLand Investment Group, which is strongly involving in promoting a bright future for precision medicine.

The company has established an institute for precision medicine in partnership with Southern University of Science and Technology.

[Funeral Association recommends QR code tombstone](#)



More eco-friendly ways of honoring the deceased are needed. [File Photo]

More eco-friendly ways of honoring the deceased are needed as traditional tombstones swallow natural resources and degrade the ecological environment. The answer, says an expert, is a QR code tombstone.

According to Wang Yanzhen, Vice-President of the China Funeral Association: "In modern times, people should commemorate their deceased loved ones in modern ways".

"The internet provides impetus for the transformation and upgrading of funeral modes. Thus, the QR code tombstone can play the same role as a traditional one in helping people offer sacrifices to their departed ones," said Wang.

Based on the QR codes and the mobile internet, the new type of tombstone uses digital data to store a biography, photographs and videos of the departed.

By scanning the QR code, one can gain access to all these memorial materials, helping make a commemoration interactive and far more educational. Made of bronze and pottery, the QR code tombstone helps save land and protect the environment, Wang argued.

He explained that China started to promote cremation in the 1950s in order to save land. However, after reform and opening up, the resurgent idea of "Being laid to rest" prompted people to build cemeteries and bury the bone ash from cremation of their deceased relatives.

However, cemeteries, especially large, luxury ones, not only occupy farmland and forestland but also consume wood, stones and cement, leading to resource waste and environment degradation. Therefore, ways of honoring the deceased

should be changed.

Statistics show that it takes 200,000 square meters of land to provide cemeteries for 70,000 dead people each year in Beijing alone. Without a change in thinking, the living would have to fight for land with the dead in the near future, Wang added.

Autopsy to shed light on death of student



A dormitory building in Taifu Town Middle School [Photo/Shanghai Daily]

An autopsy is being conducted on a middle school student alleged to have fallen to his death on Saturday, with no evidence having been found so far to suggest he was physically abused, officials in Luzhou, Sichuan province, said at a news conference on Thursday.

He Shaopeng, deputy mayor and public security bureau director of Luzhou, said the chest and belly of the student's body had been cut open and lacerations were found in his liver and spleen.

The publicity department of Luxian—a county under the administration of Luzhou—said on Wednesday that a 14-year-old male student of Taifu Middle School in Taifu town was found dead outside his dormitory building at about 6 a.m. on Saturday.

The department stated that local police did not think the boy had been murdered after initial investigations, but this caused public outcry, with many people suspecting that the boy was beaten to death by five other students who are children of local officials.

Mao Handong, a police officer with Luzhou public security bureau, said at the

conference that none of the officials' children were proved to have been classmates with, or to have known of, the deceased student.

Lyu Yugang, director of the Ministry of Education's basic education department, said at a conference in Beijing on Thursday that he felt sorry for the death of the student and had requested education departments in Sichuan to assist local authorities in discovering the cause of the student's death and reporting to the ministry in a timely manner.

A video obtained by Lyu Qingfu, a reporter at Xinhua News Agency, showed the mother of the deceased student visiting a crematory and cutting clothes off her son's body to expose a large purple area on his back and wounds on both hands and elbows, suggesting that the boy might have been beaten to death.

People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of China, said in an opinion piece on its WeChat account on Wednesday that local governments should release information in a timely and accurately manner in emergency situations.

"Timely and accurate information, as well as an authoritative and convincing autopsy report, will help clarify facts and dispel rumors," it said.

[Reforms are a shot in the arm for capital's healthcare system](#)

A nurse at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital cares for an inpatient.
[Photo/China Daily]

Beijing will put a new medical care reform plan into effect on Saturday, which will bring an end to medicine price markups, according to local officials.

More than 3,600 medical institutions are involved in the reform and all of them will abolish the medicine price markups, according to Fang Laiying, head of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Health and Family Planning.

It is estimated that the cost of treatment per outpatient will be reduced by about 5 percent on average thanks to cuts in medicine prices, while there will be an average cost increase of 2.5 percent for inpatient treatment due to the growth of certain service charges, according to Fang.

Community hospitals and medical institutions will be given the same access to the medicines usually prescribed in higher-level hospitals, so that patients will have more choices, Fang said.

Marking up medicine prices is a practice that has been adopted by most public hospitals in China since the 1950s. It allows hospitals to sell drugs with

markups usually at a rate of 15 percent above the drugs' tag prices.

Its purpose was to make up for the shortage in healthcare funding from the government, and it became part of doctors' salaries, creating incentive for doctors to over-prescribe.

In 2015, incomes from checkups, tests and medical treatment materials accounted for about 66 percent of the city's medical services revenue, while the incomes from the intelligence and labor of medical personnel, such as diagnosis, surgery, treatment and nursing, which are closely related to the quality of medical services, only accounted for 34 percent, according to Fang.

"The core of this new reform is to separate the functions of medical services and drug sales so as to shut down the markup mechanism in public medical institutions in Beijing," Fang said.

"The separation will cut off the channel for making money through over-prescription and help medical practitioners provide better treatments and other services," Fang said.

"The reform will effectively motivate the medical staff to pay more attention to the medical service they are providing, and further improve the doctor-patient relationship," said Li Ruifeng, a medical reform expert from Beijing University of Chinese Medicine.

[Visit to Australia by Vice President of the United States, Mike Pence](#)

We look forward to welcoming the Vice President of the United States, Mike Pence, to Australia on April 22.

The Vice President's visit, so early in the term of the new Administration, underlines the strength of our alliance.

Vice President Pence will also visit the Republic of Korea, Japan and Indonesia. The Australian Government believes that United States engagement in the Asia Pacific remains absolutely crucial to the region's stability and prosperity.

Vice President Pence's visit provides an important opportunity to discuss the depth and breadth of Australia's strategic, security and economic relationship with the United States, and to underline our commitment to work with the Trump Administration to advance our shared interests in our region and globally.

In addition to engaging with Government, Vice President Pence will also meet business leaders and representatives of the Australia-US community in Sydney.