Beijing Tongrentang, was founded in Kangxi 8. It is a famous time-honored brand in the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry. Science Arts collaborated with Beijing Tong Ren Tang in 2004 and brought this well established brand to Singapore.

Beijing Tong Ren Tang has a long history, being founded in the Kangxi period, in 1669. Can you share with us how the collaboration between Beijing Tong Ren Tang and Science Arts came about?

Mr Tan Lee Huak, owner of Science Arts Co Pte Ltd.

Beijing Tong Ren Tang has outlets in many countries in the Asia Pacific. Its headquarters is in Beijing, China. The company has collaborated with more than 20 distributors worldwide. They have stores in the UK, Australia, Canada and countries in the Asia Pacific. It has also partnered with various distributors and companies in different countries. In Malaysia, they have partnered with "Hai Ou" to distribute their products. Here in Singapore, Science Arts is its sole distributor. Science Arts and Beijing Tong Ren Tang went into a collaboration in 2004.
[ Interview ]

What is Science Arts history and how did it come about?

Science Arts have been around for 30 odd years. It was set up by a group of young passionate fresh graduates from The Chinese High School in the 1960s. The collaboration with Beijing Tong Ren Tang is 51% stakes held by Science Arts and 49% belongs to Beijing Tong Ren Tang.

What are some of the measures that your company has undertaken for quality control to ensure that the medicine is safe for consumption?

The side effects of most of our products are minimal. Most of the “dangerous” products are not approved in Singapore such as “Huang Lian (黄莲).” The Heath Science Authority of Singapore has certified our manufacturing facilities as good manufacturing practice (GMP) which is a global standardization for manufacturing facilities.

What are the services your company provides?

We offer a full spectrum of TCM service from acupuncture, Tui Na, Chinese internal medicine and Chinese herbs supplements. Our shop consist of a clinic for consultations, a shop to sell various TCM and also a blood analysis laboratory. The blood analysis laboratory is manned by qualified technicians who are able to diagnose illnesses by analysing the constituents of blood.

How many Beijing Tong Ren Tang/Science Arts clinics are there in Singapore?

We have three clinics in Singapore. We have a clinic at Chinatown, another clinic is situated in Alexandra Hospital and the other clinic is at the Institute of Mental Health. Our headquarters is in Macpherson. We have 12 physicians, who are qualified professors from China, working in our clinics.

Can you share with us some of your future plans?

We plan to diverse into R&D soon. We have just collaborated with Professor Wu Nanying on possibilities for research. We are also working towards collaborations with Kendang Kerbau Hospital and Singapore General Hospital.
What is your company’s best selling product?

Our bestseller is Zhonghua Sciencery. These are capsules that contain ingredients to lower “bad” cholesterol. It is to prevent coronary artery diseases. Other products such as Ling Zhi, ginseng, and gingko are also selling well.

Can you name some common ailments that the physicians in your clinic see?

The more common ailments that our customers visit us for are cancer, gout, pain, menopause, rheumatism, Parkinson’s disease, etc.

Beijing Tong Ren Tang/Science Arts is the first TCM company to receive Halal certification in Singapore. Can you share with us more about the Halal certification?

Most of our core products are certified Halal (Arabic term meaning “lawful or permissible”) by MUIS, Singapore (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore). With sound marketing networks and strategies, these products have gained much confidence from the Muslim community in Singapore. We are also seeing a trend of more Malays buying our products. Beijing Tong Ren Tang is the first TCM company that has Halal certifications for their products. They received the certification in 2007. A favorite among the Malay customers is the product “hong ju.” It is a natural product that is refined and manufactured to lower cholesterol in the body. We also hired Malay consultants from the Malay Association to check the manufacturing process. This is to ensure that animal products such as scorpion, centipede, snake, sea horses, etc are not included in the products. Our company applied for 20 products to be certified halal and 19 of them were approved. Also, we have Malay physicians who are able to communicate effectively with our Malay customers.

Animal products such as scorpion, centipede, snake, sea horses, etc are not included in the Halal products.
[Interview]

What are some challenges that modern TCM is facing now?

TCM faces a number of challenges. The Chinese physicians must continue to upgrade themselves through lectures and read to learn more about the use of TCM. Another challenge is to upgrade the standard and quality of TCM products.

Traditional Chinese Medicine is mostly from plants, animals and natural minerals produced both in China and abroad. What are some examples of TCM that can be used for treating cancer? How effective is TCM in treating cancers?

Very commonly, cancer patients seek treatment from TCM. Usually, it is an adjuvant treatment together with Western medicine such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy. TCM alleviates the side effects caused by such treatments. It reduces side effects such as loss of weight, loss of appetite, hair loss, nausea, etc. It also reduces the toxicity of Western medicine. Lingzhi and cordyceps are examples of TCM that cancer patients consume.

In the treatment of cancer, Western medicine can be rather harsh (chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgery). In general, how does TCM aim to treat cancers?

Cancer is very difficult to treat. TCM is mainly an adjuvant therapy to increase the body’s immune system. It reduces side effects of Western medicine, reduces toxicity of Western drugs and increases longevity.

TCM is seen as an alternative medicine that only the older generation appreciates. Do you see more young people who seeking TCM as treatments?

Nowadays, we see an increasing number of young people who seek TCM for the treatment of their ailments. 15%–20% of our customers are young people. One of the reason for this trend is that the side effects of TCM is generally few as compared to Western medicine. However, most TCM are bitter to taste.

Biodata of Mr Tan Lee Huak, owner of Science Arts Co Pte Ltd

Mr Tan graduated from The Chinese High School and is a typical Chinese graduate. In the 1970s, together with some classmates, Mr Lee started the business of TCM. Together with the growth of the nation, Science Arts went through a long and arduous journey. As people become more health conscious, they looked for ways to improve their wellbeing. Taking TCM is slowly viewed as a way to living well. Mr Lee’s hardwork saw fruits of labor after 30 years, when Science Arts collaborated with Beijing Tong Ren Tang in 2004. Mr Lee was elected as the chairman of the Chinese Business Association in 2001. Science Arts was awarded GMP in 2006, Halal certification in 2007, and the People Developer Standard award. ■