Interview with CEO of
Ma Kuang (马光),
Mr Huang Chuan Sheng

Ma Kuang is one of the key TCM healthcare providers in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan providing clinical and consultation services. It is a one-stop TCM and wellness healthcare service to the general public.

Ma Kuang Healthcare Group has three major business areas: TCM general and specialist clinical consultation and Chinese medicines; healthcare products and supplements; and TCM management consultancy and outsourcing services.
Can you share with us the history of Ma Kuang?

Ma Kuang is the name of a place in Taiwan. It is the place where my family and I live. My father and grandfather were Chinese physicians. Following in their footsteps, I became a physician as well. My grandfather started his TCM practice a hundred years ago in Taiwan. I started my company, which is more or less a continuation of my grandfather’s business, in 1999.

How many shops does Ma Kuang have?

In 1999, the first shop was set up in Singapore (Middle Road). Since then, Ma Kuang has expanded rapidly. It currently owns the largest chains of TCM clinics with a network of 23 clinics island-wide in Singapore and 10 TCM clinics in Malaysia, and has extended its reach to Indonesia.

What are some of the future plans of the company?

Geographic expansion and diversification. We plan to move our brand forward geographically to make TCM international. We are now focusing on China markets besides expanding into the neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia markets. We plan to diversify our health products and service further so that we can deliver a more holistic healthcare service to one and all, giving our customers a more pleasurable experience with us.

China is a very big market, so we plan to set up some shops in China within five years. In future, we will also open more outlets in Malaysia and Indonesia.

What are your views on the modernization of TCM?

I feel that many people think TCM is a thing of the past. However, I think TCM can be modernized and introduced to foreign countries. Unfortunately, due to political issues, it is difficult to introduce TCM to certain countries.

Why did you choose Singapore to be your business headquarters?

I chose to base my business in Singapore for various reasons. One of them is that Singapore is a cosmopolitan country with a large Chinese population. Its culture is also very similar to that of Taiwan. Since Singapore is emblematic of Asia Pacific’s modernization and industrial progress, my idea is to use Singapore as a brand to package TCM to other countries, especially western countries.
What are the services provided by Ma Kuang?

We provide many services including TCM consultations, wellness centers, tui na, acupuncture, and the sale of herbal medicines. One other aspect of our business is providing overall business solutions to hospitals and clinics worldwide. This consultancy arm of the business entails the production of software that is tailor-made for each of our clients.

Where are the herbs grown? Do you have any factories processing the herbal medicines?

We have no factories. We collaborate with reputable suppliers in Taiwan to process our products. These factories have received Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) certification in Taiwan.

How do you maintain the quality of these herbal medicines?

The standard of our products is high. Furthermore, the Singapore Health Sciences Authority carries out stringent checks on all imported products, checking for things such as mineral content, microorganism content etc. Anything above the harmful level will be rejected. Currently, we have 500 licensed products from the Health Sciences Authority.

Where are most of the physicians in Ma Kuang from?

Our business not only focuses on TCM products, but we also put much emphasis on TCM consultation services. Currently, we have around 120 staff in Singapore and an estimated staff of 600 in the Asia Pacific. Ma Kuang hires highly experienced Chinese physicians and has the highest number of qualified TCM physicians. Most of our physicians are from China. More than half of them have a Bachelor of Medicine (TCM) degree and most of them have clinical experience in China’s hospitals.
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<th>Q: Do you have any collaborations with private and/or public hospitals in Singapore?</th>
<th>A: Other than referring complicated cases to the hospitals in Singapore, we do not collaborate with any of them.</th>
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<td>Q: What are the common ailments that your physicians see?</td>
<td>A: The cases most often reviewed are obstetrics and chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, joint pains, gout, common flu cases, etc. Our customers are mostly Chinese. A lot of our patients are the elderly, but we are starting to see an encouraging trend of more young people coming to seek TCM treatments.</td>
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<td>Q: What are your views on TCM and its application in cancer?</td>
<td>A: The use of TCM in oncology is mainly as an adjuvant therapy. TCM boosts the weakened immune system in cancer patients. Acupuncture can be used in cancer patients suffering from chronic pain in order to relieve their pain. TCM is also used to “balance the body” in cancer patients who undergo harsh regimens consisting of chemotherapy, irradiation, surgery, etc. However, some forms of western medicine (e.g. chemotherapy) cannot be replaced with TCM.</td>
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<td>Q: What are the side effects of TCM?</td>
<td>A: There are generally less side effects in TCM than in western medicine. The medicines are usually bitter, and may cause vomiting or stomach discomfort due to the interactions between the different herbs in the concoction. Once the body has adjusted and become used to the medicine, the side effects usually disappear.</td>
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<td>Q: Why is TCM a unique form of therapy?</td>
<td>A: TCM has been around for thousands of years. Different herbs are combined and complement each other to bring out the effects of the prescription. Nowadays, we see that TCM is being modernized; for example, we use modern methods to analyze the composition of TCM. However, we still do not know what brings out the therapeutic effects of the combined herbs.</td>
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<td>Q: Share with us your background and experience in starting up Ma Kuang.</td>
<td>A: I am a trained Chinese physician. Since starting up this business in Singapore, I have learned to deal with the many problems and challenges of entrepreneurship. I also enrolled in the EMBA course at the National University of Singapore to better equip myself with the necessary skills, and have learned a lot from the course. It is a very satisfying experience to have colleagues who share the same vision and goals as me. I am honored to work with and learn from them.</td>
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