

Prof. Hong Zhao, *ATM*'s Associate Editor-in-Chief, honored with Beijing's 10 Outstanding Young Doctors Award

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Professor Hong Zhao (*Figure 1*), 38 years, MD, is a tutor of graduate students, an associate chief physician, and a deputy director of the Laboratory of Abdominal Surgery of Cancer Hospital, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences.

Prof. Zhao's main interests include the surgical management of tumors in colorectal cancer liver metastasis, neuroendocrine tumor and liver cancer, as well as translational research of abdominal cancers. He pioneered the establishment of multidisciplinary treatment (MDT) system of colorectal cancer in CICAMS and was involved in the development of the first Chinese MDT for neuroendocrine tumors.

He was the contributor of the *Ministry of Health Guidelines on the Standardized Management of Hepatocellular Carcinoma in City- and County-level Hospitals*. He currently also serves as the deputy chairman of Beijing Tumor Society Youth Committee, Secretary of Expert Committee of Colorectal Cancer with Liver Metastases, China International Exchange and Promotive Association for Medical and Health Care, deputy editor-in-chief of *Annals of Translational Medicine*, director of the editorial department of *Electronic Journal of Liver Tumor*, corresponding member of the editorial committee of *Chinese Medical Journal*, and reviewer of the Beijing Natural Science Foundation.

In 2009, he was awarded the honorable title of "Beijing Municipal Scientific and Technological New Star". He was also the winner of Beijing Municipal Science and Technology Progress Award (second and third prizes), Chinese Medical Association Science and Technology Progress Award (second prize), and Chinese Health Care International Exchange Promotion Award (first grade). In 2014, he received the Fok Ying Tung Education Foundation (FYTEF) Young Teachers' Award (second prize).



Figure 1 Professor Hong Zhao.

Up to now, he has published more than 58 articles in peer-reviewed journals (including 14 articles in SCI-indexed journals). He was the author or translator of a few monographs including *Selected Cases in the Surgical Treatment of Abdominal Tumors* and *Surgical Treatment of Hepatic Metastasis of Colorectal Cancer: Strategies and Practices*.

Prof. Zhao: patients' health is the biggest compliment to me

In Beijing, Mid-July is the hottest period of time in a year with surging heat waves sweeping across the city. With the scorching sun overhead, few people still walk on the road. In the Cancer Hospital of Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (Cancer Hospital), however, it is totally a different story—large swaths of people inside with uninterrupted heavy noises. You definitely feel it's a lot hotter in the hospital.



Figure 2 Prof. Zhao graduated from Peking Union Medical College.

Committed to early aspirations

After busy work in the morning, Prof. Zhao, associate chief physician of abdominal surgery at the Cancer Hospital appeared a little tired. *“Every patient came to the hospital with trust and expectations, and I must try to be patient when communicating with them and their families”*.

Prof. Zhao became a doctor largely because of family reasons. *“Two of my uncles died of illness at an early age. At that time, I thought my father would live longer if I were a doctor”*.

With the long-cherished aspiration in mind, Prof. Zhao decided to give up the chance to be recommended to admission in Tsinghua University. Instead he took the college entrance examination and got a high score enabling him to be enrolled into Peking Union Medical College (Figure 2).

As a doctor, he has been practicing for more than a decade, realizing his simple wishes in the early years and saving numerous lives.

He had spent three nights in the ward to save a patient with massive bleeding after a surgery; he once stayed in the operating room for more than ten hours to deal with emergencies during the surgery; sometimes he also felt discontented and depressed due to patients' misunderstanding.

“But when I see a patient gets out of the operating room and is discharged on full recovery, that sense of joy and achievement is just unspeakable”. Now he always says he made the right and worthwhile choice to become a doctor.

Pursue the best treatment

During the work, Prof. Zhao is good at figuring out

multiple solutions to one problem. He is one of the earliest voices in China calling for the establishment of MDT system to deal with complicated diseases like hepatic metastasis of colorectal cancer and neuroendocrine neoplasm.

“One disease often involves several medical disciplines, and therefore a good customized treatment solution requires wisdom from more than one doctor; because limitations in his professional know-how could bring adverse impact and even lead to a wrong decision for the patient”, he said.

Take neuroendocrine neoplasm for instance, the disease can be classified as functional or nonfunctional depending on whether there are neuroendocrine symptoms at organs like stomach, intestinal tract, and pancreas. Patients may undergo both regular imaging and functional imaging, and the treatment goals should at least include controlling the neoplasm or relieving symptoms. In addition to routine surgery and radiotherapy, chemotherapy, targeted therapy, biological therapy, and radionuclide therapy may also be applied. *“With so many problems to address and so many options available, fighting the disease requires close cooperation among multiple departments including the departments of internal medicine, surgery, radiology, imaging, pathology, and endocrine”*.

No matter how busy he is, Prof. Zhao will find some time to call a meeting every week with colleagues from other departments. They bring different medical cases and discuss how to use MDT system and craft a better therapy for the patients. These discussions have proven to be very fruitful.

Glad to be “bridge”

However, becoming an excellent physician is apparently not Prof. Zhao's (Figure 3) ultimate goal. *“Advance in medical science stems from cross-industry innovation. I hope to be an outstanding medical scientist and serve as a ‘bridge’ between clinical practices and scientific research”*, he said. *“During the clinical practices, we always encounter crossroads and wonder which direction to go. At present we make decisions based on evidence-based medical science and choose a path that we believe is the most likely to lead to our destination. However, some diseases are very complicated and our understanding is limited, so what should we do if there is no feasible path? At this time, we have to use innovative technology and develop new solutions to solve these problems, and apply the new technology to clinical practices as soon as possible”*.

If his motivation in scientific research stems from his personal interest, his capability in scientific research is largely



Figure 3 Prof. Hong Zhao and his tutor Linfang Wang (Academician, the Chinese Academy of Engineering), Prof. Shiyong Miao, Prof. Jianqiang Cai, and his team.

attributable to systematic training he received in Peking Union Medical College, under the instruction of Prof. Linfang Wang, academician of Chinese Academy of Engineering. “I’m deeply grateful for her strict mentoring”, he said.

“In those years, I barely slept before 1am every day. I was scratched by animals and my eyes were burned by UV light in the animal room. But when you look back, you will realize that what you have experienced is actually a great treasury in the life”. Thanks to the “Never Give Up” spirit, Prof. Zhang has made substantial progress in medical researches.

His researches have been published at *Nature Genetics*, a prestigious international medical journal, and drew extensive attention and widespread plaudits. He also undertook several national researches as leader or principal member of the research team. In terms of talent training, Prof. Zhao has made good use of the MDT and laboratory resources and adopted heuristic teaching and individualized teaching to foster students’ ability in innovative and creative thinking. “Team spirit and the ability to transform science and technology into practice are particularly important, so that the

clinical team and research team can work together in a seamless manner to advance medical science”.

Being a doctor means heavy workload, great responsibility, irregular lifestyle as well as a lot of stress stemming from work, life and other areas, but Prof. Zhao has kept in mind more about the pleasant and moving moments during his work. “When I get old and recall my work experience as a doctor, I think the experience is still memorable”.

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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