

Research on Therapeutic Landscape Design Strategies and Practical Paths of Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospitals Based on the Concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection

Yan Tu

Luoyang Vocational College of Science and Technology, Luoyang 471800, Henan, China

Copyright: © 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: Against the backdrop of the new era, integrating the concept of intangible cultural heritage protection into medical landscape design holds great promise. This article expounds the therapeutic landscape design strategies and practical paths of traditional Chinese medicine hospitals based on the concept of intangible cultural heritage protection from five aspects: First, shape the cultural atmosphere of traditional Chinese medicine by using multi-sensory experiences; The second is to apply the Five Elements theory to guide spatial layout. The third is to integrate traditional craftsmanship into the design of landscape ornaments. The fourth is to create a complex sensory experience by using Chinese herbal plants; The fifth is to create a dynamic display space for intangible cultural heritage. Through systematic planning and meticulous design, intangible cultural heritage is passed down in therapeutic landscapes, and the charm of landscapes is highlighted in the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage, achieving a perfect integration of medical care, landscapes and culture. This provides a new idea for creating medical landscapes that combine therapeutic functions with cultural connotations.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage protection; Traditional Chinese Medicine; Hospital Therapeutic landscape; Multi-sensory experience; Living Inheritance

Online publication: June 26, 2025

1. Introduction

With the improvement of people's living standards, the therapeutic nature of medical environments has attracted much attention. As an important carrier of traditional medicine, traditional Chinese medicine hospitals should be distinctive in the creation of therapeutic landscapes. Meanwhile, the protection of intangible cultural heritage has been elevated to a national strategy and has become a key focus of cultural construction in the new era. Introducing the concept of intangible cultural heritage protection into the therapeutic landscape design of traditional Chinese medicine hospitals is of great significance for inheriting traditional Chinese medicine culture, highlighting the charm of the landscape, and promoting the recovery of patients.

2. Landscape and Artistic Conception Creation Based on Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture

Traditional Chinese medicine culture is profound and extensive. Integrating it into the therapeutic landscape design of hospitals can highlight the cultural heritage of the landscape and allow patients to experience the unique charm of traditional Chinese medicine in a beautiful environment. Traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes “observation, auscultation and olfaction, inquiry, and palpation”. Through observing color and shape, identifying diseases by listening to sounds, and diagnosing by feeling the pulse, this reminds us that landscape design should attach importance to multi-sensory experiences. When designing, at the visual level, different color combinations can be used to simulate the attributes of the Five Elements. For instance, white represents metal, symbolizing purity and elegance. Black is like water, mysterious and unfathomable. Green is like wood, thriving and flourishing. At the olfactory level, cloves, curcuma and other plants can be planted, or scented candles and incense devices can be set up to allow the faint medicinal fragrance to surround the park, creating a blend of “fragrance and scenery”. At the tactile level, materials of different textures such as stone, bamboo and wood can be used to pave the ground and embed them in the landscape walls, allowing patients to walk through them and feel the changes in texture. On the auditory level, wind chimes and water features can be arranged in different spaces to create variations in sound and rhythm, or background music can be set up to create a serene atmosphere. The integration of multi-sensory experiences enables patients to fully immerse themselves in it, which is conducive to healing and recovery. At the same time, by means of the changing light and shadow, a spatial artistic conception of “changing scenes with every step” is created, such as the faint dawn light, the slanting sun washing, and the moonlight filtering through the flowers, allowing patients to perceive the passage of time and the cycle of life in the changing rhythm of light and shadow^[1-5].

3. Spatial Layout Guided by the Five Elements Theory

The Five Elements theory is an important component of traditional Chinese medicine theory. Applying it to the spatial layout of hospital treatment landscapes can help create a healing environment full of vitality and in harmony with Yin and Yang. The Five Elements Theory emphasizes the balance of Yin and Yang and the combination of movement and stillness. Based on this, therapeutic landscapes in hospitals should achieve balance and unity in spatial organization. Specifically, designers can first correspond the five elements’ directions on the master plan, that is, east, south, west, north and center respectively correspond to wood, fire, metal, water and earth, and then conceive the spatial relationships of each area. For instance, the east side belongs to wood and is suitable for arranging bamboo forests, medicinal herb gardens, etc., to create a vibrant scene. The west side belongs to metal and is suitable for setting up coffee bars, music corners, etc., to create a sense of elegance, tranquility and purity. In the selection of landscape nodes, a square that bears the nature of the soil can be set up in the central area, connecting the east and the west, symbolizing the communication between Yin and Yang and the resolution of conflicts. Wooden corridors or stone pavilions can be set up along the edge of the square to connect with other areas and enhance the permeability of the space. At the same time, landscape design should achieve a balance of density and sparseness, as well as a combination of curves and straight lines, to create spatial variations. Just as a quiet tea room is carved out deep in the thick forest, with elegant rocks and fragrant orchids appearing in the winding path leading to a secluded place, one can suddenly understand the meaning of the space. Landscape paving materials can also correspond to the Five Elements. Earth, stones, firewood, porcelain and other materials complement each other, highlighting the wisdom of traditional Chinese medicine in “the transformation of Yin and Yang and the transformation of the five elements”. The earth is paved with earth and stones, symbolizing being down-to-earth. The pavilions and corridors are constructed of wood, symbolizing prosperity and flourishing. The water feature is decorated with blue and white tiles, symbolizing the courage to forge ahead in the rapids without losing elegance and composure. The Five Elements generate and restrain each other, maintaining harmony without uniformity, highlighting the traditional Chinese medical concept of the unity of heaven and man^[6].

4. Integration of Traditional Craftsmanship into Landscape Art Design

Intangible cultural heritage is the folk art of the Chinese nation, which contains the core of humanistic spirit. Integrating it into the therapeutic landscape features of the hospital not only highlights the cultural connotation but also evokes patients' sense of cultural identity and pride, which is conducive to easing their mood. When designing, one can collect local characteristic craftsmanship from various sources, such as lacquer painting, nut carving, and ox bone carving, and visit the inheritors of these skills to deeply understand the essence of the craftsmanship and the creative inspiration. At the theme landscape nodes, these characteristic craft elements can be embedded according to local conditions. For instance, the entrance signs can adopt Suzhou embroidery patterns, the floor can be paved with local characteristic brick carvings, and the benches can be made with lacquer painting techniques, etc. This way, intangible cultural heritage elements can be scattered throughout the space without overshadowing the main elements. For instance, Suzhou embroidery is renowned for its intricate stitches and brilliant colors. Representative patterns of flowers, birds and beasts can be extracted and transformed into landscape wall designs. Brick carvings can select elements such as peonies and pomegranates, which symbolize good fortune and happiness, and combine them to form landscape paving. Lacquer paintings have a high gloss and bright colors, and can be integrated into the painted decoration of corridors and pavilions, presenting a breathtakingly beautiful scene. At the same time, we encourage inheritors of skills to move into the park, set up workshops, and make them part of the living landscape. If shadow puppetry is vivid in form and combines education with entertainment, a stage can be set up in the courtyard and it can be performed regularly. The dough figurine craft is vivid and lifelike. Why not invite the artisans to make cartoon characters on the spot? It will make everyone burst into laughter. Bamboo weaving, straw weaving and other skills can also be made on the spot by skilled artisans, allowing everyone to experience the joy of weaving. Hospitals can also cooperate with cultural and tourism departments to regularly hold intangible cultural heritage creative markets, interactive exhibitions, etc., to encourage more people to participate in the protection of intangible cultural heritage and enhance the cultural influence of the hospital^[7-10].

5. Multi-sensory Experience of the Application of Chinese Herbal Plants

Chinese herbal medicine is an important carrier of traditional Chinese medicine culture. By creating a multi-sensory landscape with Chinese herbal plants, patients can fully experience the unique charm of traditional Chinese medicine during their recovery. Traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes "treating the root cause of diseases and addressing both the symptoms and the root cause". The configuration of plants should also follow this principle. According to the needs of different diseases, different medicinal plants should be reasonably combined to enable them to exert their therapeutic effects. For instance, in the cardiovascular ward, lotus seeds and osmanthus can be prioritized for cultivation, which have the effect of calming the mind and soothing the spirit. In the liver and gallbladder disease area, plants such as Bupleurum and mint can be grown, which have the function of regulating qi and relieving depression. The colors of plants can also be ingeniously utilized. For instance, plants that regulate qi and strengthen the spleen are mostly green and can be planted in clusters. Flowers that can clear the mind and improve eyesight, such as osmanthus fragrans and cassia seeds, are mostly light yellow and can be planted in clusters for decoration. At the same time, pay attention to the diversity of plant configuration, combining trees, shrubs and grasses, and interspersing flowers, fruits and medicinal herbs to increase the richness of the space. In terms of layout, the ecological habits of plants should also be taken into account. Shade-loving plants such as adiantum are suitable for planting on the shady side, while shade-loving plants such as sunflowers are suitable for placement in sunny areas, balancing practicality and ornamental value. When choosing plants, it is also necessary to consider the combination of flowering and fruiting periods to ensure that there are always beautiful scenes to enjoy throughout the four seasons. For instance, in spring, magnolias and peach blossoms are the main flowers; in summer, lotus and hibiscus are the main aquatic plants; in autumn, wild chrysanthemums and hibiscus compete in beauty; in winter, pines, cypresses and winter jasmine stand out against the snow and frost, allowing patients to always be bathed in the beauty of nature^[11].

6. Exhibition Space for Intangible Cultural Heritage under Dynamic Inheritance

To invigorate intangible cultural heritage, dynamic inheritance is of vital importance. It is necessary to encourage the public to get involved in intangible cultural heritage, participate in it, and experience its charm firsthand. The design of the intangible cultural heritage exhibition space in hospitals should be people-oriented, creating conditions and carefully organizing rich, interesting and diverse intangible cultural heritage experience activities to enhance public participation enthusiasm. The design should be adapted to local conditions and individual differences. It is necessary to take into account the physical conditions and interests of different patients and organize activities suitable for their participation. On the one hand, hospitals can collaborate with cultural and museum institutions to invite renowned inheritors of intangible cultural heritage to give lectures in the hospital. They can attract patients with stories. For instance, a singer of ancient Buyi songs can tell the life stories in the songs, and an inheritor of Shu embroidery can share the inner journey behind the embroidery works. At the same time, volunteer training is carried out, allowing patients to become little guides and share their feelings about participating in intangible cultural heritage from the first-person perspective^[12-14]. On the other hand, the design of the exhibition space should create immersive scenes. For instance, VR technology can be used to reproduce the process of Miao embroidery, holographic projection can be employed to bring intangible cultural heritage patterns to life, and body-sensing devices can be utilized to allow patients to experience the joy of making pottery and dough figurines, thereby passing on culture in an entertaining and educational way. Hospitals can also leverage new media platforms to set up live-streaming classes on intangible cultural heritage, allowing intangible cultural heritage inheritors to interact with patients online, or create H5 pages to showcase the charm of intangible cultural heritage in a concentrated manner, attracting more people to participate and pay attention. In addition, hospitals can regularly hold intangible cultural heritage design competitions, encouraging the integration of traditional skills with modern aesthetics, making intangible cultural heritage come alive and thriving, and allowing cultural creativity and rehabilitation therapy to go hand in hand^[15].

7. Conclusion

Both traditional Chinese medicine culture and intangible cultural heritage are treasures of China's fine traditional culture. Integrating the two into the therapeutic landscape design of modern hospitals is an innovative move that conforms to the trend of The Times and promotes the essence of the nation. Designers should deeply explore the intrinsic spirit of traditional Chinese medicine and intangible cultural heritage, put people first, adapt to local conditions, and meticulously design in aspects such as multi-sensory experience, spatial layout, landscape ornaments, plant matching, and dynamic inheritance, to make the healing landscape poetic and ensure that cultural genes are passed down from generation to generation. It is expected that under the continuous exploration of designers, more and more therapeutic landscapes in traditional Chinese medicine hospitals will enable patients to appreciate the beauty of traditional Chinese medicine and the soul of intangible cultural heritage in a pleasant and delightful way, achieve physical and mental healing imperceptibly, and pass on cultural heritage and cultivate the soul in an entertaining and educational way, truly achieving a double harvest of medical rehabilitation and cultural inheritance.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Liao D, Huang Y, Shen X, 2024, The Application of Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Preservation Culture in Rehabilitation Landscape Design: A Case Study of the Partial Design of Anji Lingxi Park. *Footwear Technology and*

- Design, 4(19):99-101.
- [2] Youdaoplaceholder0, Landscape Design strategies for Urban Park Green Space under the Sponge City Theory - taking Anji Lingxi Park as an Example. Zhu M, 2023, Beauty and The Times (Urban Edition), (09).
 - [3] Youdaoplaceholder6, Wang Y, 2023, Discussion on the Landscape Design of Taiyuan Fenhe Park. Footwear Technology and Design, (09).
 - [4] Youdaoplaceholder2, Pan F, 2016, Research on Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Preservation Culture and Modern Convalescent Landscape Design. Wuhan University of Technology.
 - [5] Youdaoplaceholder6, Fanny, 2022, Exploration on the Construction of Jiangnan Cultural Theme Parks in the Yangtze River Delta Region. Journal of Wuxi Vocational College of Commerce, (04).
 - [6] Lu Ju, Chen Y, 2025, The Design Practice of Medical Buildings under the Concept of Healing Environment: A Case Study of Dongjin Campus of Xiangyang Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine. China Construction, (06):100-102.
 - [7] Youdaoplaceholder6, Yang X, 2021, Foreign Landscape Architecture History Teaching by Introducing Three-dimensional Graphic Analysis: A Case Study of Italian Renaissance Gardens. Journal of Landscape Research, (02).
 - [8] Youdaoplaceholder6, Yang T, Feng Z, 2021, The Moral Image of Doctors in Chinese Classical Literature. Chinese Medical Humanities, (03).
 - [9] Youdaoplaceholder6, Yuan T, Wang Z, 2020, Investigation and In-depth Reflection on the Medical Cultural Relics of Bian Que in Jinan. Chinese Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine, (11).
 - [10] Youdaoplaceholder6, Deng X, 2020, The Sacred Land of Mind Learning - China's Wang Yangming Cultural Park. New Curriculum Guidance, (27).
 - [11] Youdaoplaceholder6, Cheng Z, 2020, The Expression of Sculptures in Urban Historical and Cultural Theme Parks in Contextualized Landscape Forms. Mass Literature and Art, (04).
 - [12] Liao D, Huang Y, Shen X, 2024, The Application of Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Preservation Culture in Rehabilitation Landscape Design: A Case Study of the Partial Design of Anji Lingxi Park. Footwear Technology and Design, 4(19):99-101.
 - [13] Youdaoplaceholder6, Liu D, Xie Y, 2019, Re-discussion on the Concept of Five Elements in Traditional Chinese Medicine in the New Era. Medical Diet Therapy and Health, (15).
 - [14] Youdaoplaceholder6, Wang C, 2021, Research and Practice on Landscape Design of Bamboo Culture Theme Park: A Case Study of Mucan Chinese Bamboo Expo Garden. Decoration, (08).
 - [15] Li Y, Liu C, 2020, Analysis on the Healing Landscape Design of Hospital Outdoor Space Environment. Beauty and Times (Urban Edition), (09):1-4.

Publisher's note

Whioce Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.