

A National Voice, A Unified Pharmacist Network

An Interview with Mr. Zhao Ning

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ABSTRACT

Mr. Zhao Ning currently serves as the Deputy Chief Pharmacist at Peking University First Hospital, but his influence extends far beyond the hospital walls. He is the founder of the China Pharmaceutical Affairs Network (CPAN, “藥事網”), a nationwide alliance of over 6,000 hospital pharmacists dedicated to advancing pharmacy practice and medication safety. Simultaneously, Mr. Zhao is a prominent voice in public health education, hosting the “Healthy China” show on China Central Television (CCTV) where he dispels common medication misconceptions for the general public. In this interview, he shares his unique strategy for uniting a profession and promoting the role of pharmacists through public education.

Keywords: Public Health Education, Pharmacist Advocacy, Professional Network, Profession Advancement

INTERVIEW WITH MR. ZHAO NING



Q: Your role as a pharmacist on national television is unique. Could you tell us about your work on China Central Television (CCTV) and the motivation behind it?

Mr. Zhao: In China, media platforms have a significant role in shaping public perception. It is essential to make good use of television exposure to promote the role of pharmacists. I am currently

the host of the medical show “Healthy China” on CCTV, as well as a medical guest on other shows on CCTV. On the show, I invite various medical experts to share credible health information and debunk common myths.

As the national broadcaster, CCTV provides an unparalleled platform to showcase the pharmacist’s expertise and professionalism to a vast audience. To date, our content has accumulated more than **five billion views** and trended on major social platforms like TikTok and Weibo, which has greatly enhanced the public image of pharmacists. This has also directly translated into increased demand for paid hospital pharmacist consultations.

Looking ahead, I have developed a “five-year plan” aiming to create a regular rotation of pharmacists on CCTV. This initiative will provide greater opportunities for talented pharmacists to showcase their expertise and solidify our profession’s influence.

Q: In addition to your media work, you founded the China Pharmacist Association Network (CPAN, “藥事網”). What motivated you to establish CPAN?

Mr. Zhao: The journey began in 2013, a time when the value of pharmacists was not widely recognized in China. Most physicians and patients were unfamiliar with our expertise, so the utilisation of pharmacist consultations was low.

An opportunity arose when a prominent newspaper, China Pharmaceutical News, invited me to write a blog on drug information. The overwhelmingly positive reader feedback

highlighted a clear public appetite for pharmacist-led education. This success inspired me to connect with fellow hospital pharmacists to form a professional team. Our founding principle was simple: by uniting pharmacists in patient education, we could collectively elevate the public's perception of our profession.

Q: How does CPAN connect pharmacists across China and create a trusted community?

Mr. Zhao: To ensure a trusted, professional environment, membership is verified through a real-name system where pharmacists must confirm their identity, often using their official hospital credentials. This allowed us to build a secure network that has grown to over 6,000 hospital pharmacists.

Within this community, members share views on new policies, seek advice on clinical challenges, and discuss relevant news, from government regulations to medical incidents and recruitment advertisements. Our members actively engage in discussion, fostering a lively and interactive community.

We also have specialty subgroups for clinical pharmacists, Chinese medicine pharmacists, and PIVAS (Pharmacy Intravenous Admixture Services) pharmacists to exchange specific insights. Through this strong network, pharmacists can find credible collaborators for new projects, driving the advancement of pharmacy services and research nationwide.

Q: How do you leverage the CPAN to contribute to patient education?

Mr. Zhao: We believe that our professionalism is best demonstrated through the delivery of high-quality patient education. One of the most common approaches is writing articles on drug-related information. Making use of the reputation of CPAN, we collaborate with several state media outlets and have been granted permission to publish our articles in their newspapers.

Crucially, CPAN acts as a facilitator, not a gatekeeper. We connect our members with media outlets, which then independently select well-written articles for publication. This transparent, merit-based approach ensures every member has an equal opportunity.

This has a powerful secondary benefit: career advancement. In many Chinese hospitals, contributions to public education are now a key metric for promotion, so pharmacists who actively educate the public are more likely to be recognized in their careers.

Q: Online medication purchasing is now common. How has this influenced CPAN's services?

Mr. Zhao: This trend created a natural evolution for our services. After reading our articles, patients often have more questions, so many of our members now offer paid online consultations through platforms like the JD Internet Hospital (京東互聯網醫院). They provide paid services such as polypharmacy management and medication counseling.

Crucially, these consultations do not require a physician referral, establishing an autonomous and direct pharmacist-patient relationship. Patients can then order necessary non-prescription medications for home delivery. This integrated model—from education to consultation to delivery—builds lasting patient trust and solidifies the pharmacist's value in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Zhao Ning's career demonstrates a powerful dual-pronged strategy: harnessing the reach of national media to build public trust while simultaneously creating a robust, collaborative digital network to empower pharmacists from within. His efforts have not only provided a unified voice for thousands of practitioners but have also charted a clear path for the future advancement of the pharmacy profession in China.

Author's background

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