

**Harvard Medical School Medical Mandarin**  
Application for the Harvard China Faculty Grant Program

**Goal and Vision of the Course:**

As the number of Mandarin-speaking people is steadily growing in the United States, it is increasingly important for physicians to be able to provide Mandarin language services to this patient population. In Boston's Chinatown alone, there are over 6,000 residents, and a year 2000 census of the population who lived in the neighborhood area found that 69% was Asian, and 56% of the population was foreign born. Of the total population in Chinatown, 38% of the population did not speak English well or did not speak English at all, and only 19% of the adult population had some college education. Thus, cultural and language barriers to effective communication between patients and health care providers may be significant in this neighborhood.

A significant portion of the Chinese community is unable to adequately explain their symptoms in English or comprehensively understand their physician's directives in English, and therefore Mandarin-speaking physicians will be able to provide a vastly higher quality of service to these patients. Furthermore, as academic interaction and relationships between the United States and China continue to grow, the ability of American medical students to understand and speak medical Chinese will foster communication and collaboration with their Chinese colleagues and peers.

The Medical Mandarin course at Harvard Medical School (HMS) provides practical instruction in common medical terminology. The course has four primary goals:

1. Students will develop basic language skills enabling them to communicate effectively with Mandarin-speaking patients. Students will learn to understand and communicate orally using common medical Mandarin terms and expressions.
2. Students will develop a thorough understanding of medical Mandarin, traditional Chinese medicine, and Chinese culture through language study.
3. Students will develop independent Mandarin learning skills via instructional printed materials, Internet tools, textbooks, and other resources.
4. Students will gain preparation for opportunities to work with Mandarin-speaking patients and colleagues later in their medical education and careers, such as rotations at South Cove Community Health Center in Boston's Chinatown and Peking Union Medical College.

**Course Leadership and Faculty:**

Since the course's founding by medical students two years ago, Medical Mandarin has enjoyed strong continuity of student and faculty leadership. The language instructors are faculty and staff members of the HMS community including affiliated hospitals and research laboratories. All instructors have medical degrees, have practiced medicine in China or in the United States for several years, and are bilingually fluent in Mandarin and English. The course director, Dr. Shan Qin MD, PhD, is a faculty member at Children's Hospital Boston. He is a licensed gastroenterologist and has practiced medicine in China for over ten years. Dr. Qin also has experience in language education, having taught Medical English in China for three years.

**Course Participants:**

The Medical Mandarin course is intended for HMS/HSDM/HSPH students of all years, with at minimum a basic level of conversational Mandarin. The course leadership believes that students with a significant background in Mandarin stand to benefit the most and contribute the most to patient care following completion of such a course. The course has also been opened for cross-registration among the other Harvard graduate schools as well as Harvard College. There is already strong interest among the undergraduates, particularly pre-medical students interested in learning Medical Mandarin and patient interview skills for community service activities.