

Research Article

An English New Word “Painology” Should Be Made to Name the Pain Medicine —— A Discuss On the Pain Medicine to Be a Discipline

Li Sheng Zhang^{*} , Zhen Hua Wu , Xiao Li Liu 

Editorial Department, Chinese Journal of Painology, Fourth Hospital of Hebei Medical University, Shijiazhuang, China

Abstract

Background: In the pain science research field, there is no suitable English term to describe the pain medicine as discipline, “pain medicine” is only to make a general reference to this field, which is not refer to a special discipline. This count against the knowledge and the development of pain research. **Objective:** This paper aimed to make a word to name the pain medicine as a whole body. In order to make the pain medicine to be an independent discipline. **Methods:** In the English vocabulary, There is another word “algology”, which sometimes means pain treatment, but its main meaning is a discipline to research sea plant. I don’t agree with this word to name the pain discipline because it can not to make a distinction between the two meanings usually. So we suggest creating a new English term “Painology”, that is Pain + ology to describe this new discipline, using this new term to replace “pain medicine”, because there is no other English term suitable for this purpose. **Results:** The facts mentioned in the paper turned out to be right. CMA and all the authors of my journal approve to name the Chinese pain journal to be “Chinese Journal of Painology ”in 2020. Now the name of pain department in most of hospital in China is Department of Painology taken the place of Department of Pain Medicine and Department of Pain Management. **Conclusion:** The new term “Painology” is correct for the pain discipline, and we hope that the medical science and the terminology organization in the world could accept our suggestion to name the new discipline painology.

Keywords

Discipline, Painology, Pain Medicine, Terminology, Core Technology, Minimally Invasive Technology

1. Introduction

Since the establishment of IASP in 1973, the study of pain has attracted the attention of the medical community around the world. However, IASP is only a multidisciplinary joint organization, and it has not yet formed a substantive independent discipline. Physiology, pharmacology, neurology and clinical departments are often together to discuss something during the meeting, but they are respectively doing his

own research work after the meeting. The basic and clinical research of pain could not combine into a whole. Therefore, the pain research is only a “pain medicine”, not a “discipline”.

In order to make an independent pain discipline from pain medicine, because there is no an English word of pain discipline in the vocabulary, so we suggest creating a new English

^{*}Corresponding author: mazuizhang@aliyun.com (Li Sheng Zhang)

Received: 4 July 2025; **Accepted:** 8 September 2025; **Published:** 26 September 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

term “Painology” published in the journal in 2015 [1], that is pain + ology to describe this new discipline, using this new term “painology” to replace “pain medicine”. The purpose is to promote the formation and development of this new discipline. Then we named the Chinese pain journal to be “Chinese Journal of Painology” in 2020 [2, 3]. After that the new term gained Fan’s and Zhang’s approvals, the Chair and the former Chair of CMABPM, in their New Year’s address published in the journal [4, 5].

2. The Process of Creating New Term Painology

2.1. The Need to Create the New Term

Liu XL further points out that China has the largest number of independent pain clinical departments, practitioners and patients in the world, and the pain science has developed rapidly and achieved fruitful results. The pain discipline, pain physician and pain department need of professional English terms urgently. After the new word “painology” is used in 2015 [1], and then he created another word “painologist” to name the pain physician, and “Department of Painology” stands for the clinical pain department [6]. We hope sincerely that all of our colleagues at home and abroad recognize and widely use these new English terms and make them formal and normative English terms. At present the name of pain department in most of hospital in China is Department of Painology taken the place of Department of Pain Medicine and Department of Pain Management. All of the phenomena above showed that the new term “Painology” is correct to describe the pain discipline as a whole.

2.2. Other Terms Inappropriate

There are another words “algology” and dolorology, the former sometime refers to pain treatment, but its main meaning is a discipline to research seaweed, a kind of sea plant. The latter is a rare word, occasionally referring to pain. I don’t agree with these words to name the pain discipline because the meanings are confused usually and incognizance [7].

2.3. The Definition of Painology

What is pain and painology? There are a lot of definitions about the pain, but the main meaning is abnormality of the somatosensory nervous system, which is a kind of disease [8, 9]. The 2020 Edition definition of pain emphasizes that pain is subjective, and we must believe firstly the patients’ complaint of pain, and pain is the manifestation of tissue damage [10-12]. Liu XL considered that pain experience includes three connotation: pain sensation, pain perception and pain response, leading to complex and variable clinical manifestations,

symptoms and signs [13]. And he considered furtherly pain disorder is proposed: the structure and function of pain sensory nervous system are impaired, pain is the main clinical manifestation [9]. About the painology, in our opinion, the definition of painology is proposed: it contains completely all of the pain basic sciences and clinical related pain medicine to study them as a whole body, not as a separate subject. Its advantage is that the knowledge of each subject connects each other, so as to obtain a holistic concept, so that its research conclusions are more comprehensive and complete. These perspectives provide a theoretical basis and clinical thinking for the Department of Painology to diagnose and treat the pain disorders, and provide a guarantee for the patients to get a clear diagnosis and timely standard treatment, not different research conclusion and different diagnosis and treatment from different departments.

2.4. Pain Is a Kind of Disease

In 2008, the IASP Neuropathic Pain Group revised the original definition of neuropathic pain into “pain directly caused by damage of the somatosensory system or disease”, replacing the old definition of “functional disability” with “disease”, clearly stating that pain is a disease caused by different pathogenesis [9]. Treating pain as a disease is a great progress in pain knowledge now.

2.5. The Core Technique of Department of Painology

Is it possible to form this Department of Painology? Our answer is definite. just as the Department of General Practice Medicine, which doesn’t interfere with treatment of internal medicine, surgery and other departments. The key lies in that whether there is a set of systematic theoretical basis, whether there are core technologies different from the methods of diagnosis and treatment of diseases in other departments.

The core technology of the Department of Painology is minimally invasive technology in our opinion, which is derived from the puncture technique of the anesthesiology department. Nerve block and epidural block technique were applied in the treatment of painful diseases during the initial stage of pain clinic, and the curative effect is very good. Then epidural injection of glucocorticoids developed to injections of nerve destructive drugs, collagenase, medical ozone, and epidural nerve modulation and analgesia, and to radiofrequency thermocoagulation to treat painful diseases.

Before the establishment of Department of Painology, many painful diseases belong to different departments, now using the core technique to treat them in painology department can achieve better effect than scattered treatment in various departments, especially the effect for trigeminal neuralgia, herpes zoster associated pain [14, 15], lumbar disc herniation and chronic waist and leg pain is more sig-

nificant.

Most of the minimally invasive treatment techniques are by puncture under the guidance of imaging in the painology department, which is inseparable from the word "needle", and is unique in the painology department. The painology department also uses this technique to treat many painful diseases such as shoulder periarthritis, Raynaud's disease, headache, phantom limb pain, cancer pain, facial spasm and paralysis, and even angina pectoris. Minimally invasive technique of painology department is unique in the hospital, and has been recognized and praised by all departments in the hospital, thus laying the foundation for the establishment of the new discipline.

3. Results: The Establishment and Development of the Painology Discipline in China

The development process of pain medicine in China fully demonstrates that pain medicine should form an independent discipline, rather than a loose term. As part of Department of Anesthesiology, the diagnosis and treatment of painful diseases is the work of the anesthesiologist. China's pain medicine evolved from anesthesiology. As a professor of anesthesiology, Zhang LS established a pain clinic at the hospital in 1986, marking the beginning of pain disease treatment and the inception of the pain discipline. Entrusted by the Anesthesiology Branch of the Chinese Medical Association, the "Chinese Medical Association Pain Treatment Academic Conference" chaired by Zhang LS was held in Chengde City, Hebei Province from September 17 to 20, 1988. This marked a milestone in the developmental course of China's pain discipline. During the conference, the Pain Treatment Professional Group of the Anesthesiology Branch of the Chinese Medical Association was established [16]. This is the beginning of the Painology Discipline. Subsequently, under the leadership of the Pain Medicine Group, the second, third, and fourth National Pain Treatment Academic Conferences were held in Kunming from November 1 to 4, 1991; in Urumqi from September 16 to 19, 1994; and in Zhengzhou from April 16 to 19, 1998 respectively. These events formed the professional foundation of Painology Discipline and propelled the advancement of pain diagnosis and treatment practices in China to higher levels.

In September 1989, Academician Han Jisheng of the Chinese Academy of Sciences organized a group of domestic pain medicine experts and clinical specialists in pain diagnosis and treatment to hold the "First International Conference on Pain between East and West" in Beijing. He initiated the establishment of the Chinese Association for the Study of Pain (CASP) and was elected as its president, which is another important event during the China's developmental process of pain medicine as another milestone. Three years later, the Chinese Association for the Study of Pain became the "Pain

Branch Association" under the "Chinese Medical Association". In 1989, the Ministry of Health issued Document No. 12, designating anesthesiology as a clinical discipline with three core components: clinical anesthesia, intensive monitoring and treatment, and pain management [5]. It can be said that these events brought a favorable opportunity for the development of clinical pain services in China and played a positive role in promoting the advancement of the Painology Discipline in China.

4. Discussion

This article has created several new terms for the field of pain medicine, using "painology", "painologist" and "department of painology" to replace pain medicine, pain physicians and the department of pain medicine respectively. The significance lies not only in these new English terms but also in developing pain medicine as a new discipline—the painology discipline—by integrating basic research on pain with clinical studies, and combining diagnostic and therapeutic techniques from various clinical departments to enhance research standards and improve the diagnosis and treatment outcomes of painful diseases.

China's over two decades of experience in establishing painology departments fully demonstrate that applying core pain management technologies, particularly minimally invasive techniques, to treat various painful diseases has yielded abundant experience and favorable results. This clearly indicates the necessity of establishing this new discipline, which serves as crucial experience for advancing and improving the basic research level and clinical diagnosis and treatment effects in pain-related diseases.

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that the new term painology we have created is appropriate to name the pain discipline. We appeal that the medical science and the terminology organization could accept our suggestion to name the new discipline to be painology, it is beneficial to the development of the medical science in the world.

Abbreviations

CMABPM	Chinese Medical Association, Branch of Pain Medicine
IASP	International Association for the Study of Pain

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Zhang, LS., Liu, XL, Wu, ZH. An English New Word “Painology” Should Be Made to Name the Pain Medicine —A Discuss On the Pain Medicine to Be a Discipline. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2015, 11(3), 165.
<https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1672-9633.2015.03.001>
- [2] Zhang, LS. Our Journal Entering the Serial Magazines of Chinese Medical Association. Pain Clinic Journal. 2015.11(4), 245.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.issn.1672-9633.2015.04.001>
- [3] Editorial Department. This Journal Entering the New Era of Chinese Journal of Painology. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2020, 16(1). 1.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.issn.2096-8019.2020.01.001>
- [4] Fan, BF. New Start and New Journey for the Rapid Development of Painology. Chinese Journal of Painology..2021, 17(1), 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20210125-00018>
- [5] Zhang, DY. Development History and Vision of Chinese Painology. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2021, 17(1), 3-4.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20210126-00020>
- [6] Liu, XL. Recommend New English Terms for Pain Science: Painology, Painologist and Department of Painology. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2021, 17(1), 7-8.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20210101-00263>
- [7] Liu, XL. Pain Medicine Needs Standerdized Terminology. Pain Clinic Journal. 2017, 17(3), 161.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.issn.1672.9633.2017.03.001>
- [8] Liu, XL. Clinical Definition of Pain. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2021, 17(6), 580-582.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20210917-00147>
- [9] Liu, XL. Pain Disorder: Definition and Clinical Practice. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2022, 18(1), 21-24.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20220107-00006>
- [10] Raja, SN. Carr, DB. Cohen, M. et al. Translated by Chen, ZX. Xu, WJ. The Revised International Association for the Study of Pain Definition of Pain: Concepts, Challenges, and Compromises. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2020, 16(5), 341-348.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20200723-00173>
- [11] Lu ZH. Gong QJ. Fan BF. The Body Responsible Tissue for Pain Is the Somatosensory Nervous System: the Thoughts after Reading the New Definition of Pain. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2020, 16(6), 450-451.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20200925-00254>
- [12] Zhou, GM. A View on the New Pain Definition of International Association for the Study of Pain. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2020, 16(6), 452-453.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20201023-00257>
- [13] Liu, XL. Connotation of Pain and Its Clinical Significance. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2020, 16(6), 446-449.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20201101-00239>
- [14] Yang, LQ. Jia, YF. Feng, ZY. et al. Guideline for nerve block therapy of trigeminal neuralgia (2025 edition). Chinese Journal of Painology. 2025, 21(1), 7-24.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20250207-00017>
- [15] Jia, YF. Standardization and individualization of minimally invasive interventional therapy in the treatment of postherpetic neuralgia. Chinese Journal of Painology. 2025, 21(2), 165-167.
<https://doi.org/10.3760/cma.j.cn101658-20250326-00043>
- [16] Zhang, LS. The Academic Summary of the First Chinese Medical Association Pain Treatment Academic Conference. Chinese Journal of Anesthesiology. 1988, 8(6): 373-375.