Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) is regarded as “the last hope for patients” in China. As a Class A tertiary comprehensive hospital committed to delivering state-of-the-art clinical care, rigorous medical education, and innovative scientific research, it is designated by the National Health Commission as one of the national guiding centers offering diagnosis and care for complex and severe disorders. It is also a national demonstration center for higher medical education and standardized residency training, and a core national base for clinical research and technological innovation. Since the Hospital Management Institute, Fudan University, began releasing the China Hospital Rankings, PUMCH has topped the list for 11 consecutive years. In the latest ranking of 40 specialties (released in 2020), PUMCH has 28 ranked among the top 10 nationwide, of which 14 are among the top two.

With a history of a hundred years, PUMCH is reputed to be the “palace of modern medicine” and the “cradle for masters,” with the commitment of promoting the development of China’s modern medicine and meeting the expectations of countless patients across the country.
To the World’s Medical Care and International Medical Exchanges

PUMCH was founded by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1921. With a vision of “building a world-class medical center,” PUMCH bridges China and the rest of the world via medical exchanges between China and the West.

A series of research findings of the hospital has not only promoted the development of modern medical care in China, but also made great contributions to the world’s medical field. In the early 1920s, Dr. Adrian S. Taylor pioneered the use of silk thread in surgery while working at PUMCH, promoting its use in the American surgical community. In the 1920s and 1930s, specialists in microbiology, parasitology, pathology, and internal medicine from all over the world conducted many world-renowned, groundbreaking studies here on infectious diseases and parasitic diseases such as leishmaniasis, typhus, malaria, and schistosomiasis. The substantial achievements of Liu Shihao’s study on calcium and phosphorus metabolism during the same period are seen as the cornerstone of those areas in world medicine. In 1942, Liu Shihao and Zhu Xianyi proposed the concept of renal osteodystrophy in an article published in Science. It was the first disease named by Chinese scientists. In the 1950s, Song Hongzhao and other colleagues developed a groundbreaking radical chemotherapy treatment for choriocarcinoma that can cure 90 percent of patients, a percentage that used to be the fatality rate of the disease. This disease became one of the first cancers that could be cured completely. In 2015, compound inheritance of a rare null mutation and a hemizygous allele of TBX6 accounting for approximately 11 percent of congenital scoliosis cases in the series were first reported by academician Guo Guiying and his team in a paper published as an original article in the New England Journal of Medicine, which revealed a novel pathogenic mechanism that changed physicians’ concepts about the disease.

The public health development initiated by PUMCH has had a far-reaching influence in the world. In 1925, John B. Grant set up the first urban public health office. Fourteen years later, he went to India to continue his work on public health, promoting the PUMCH model in other areas of the world. In the 1930s, Chen Zhongwen developed the Dingxi model, a three-tier county-district-village medical care network. This revolutionary practice was recognized by the UN’s Alma-Ata Declaration 40 years later, and the model became a benchmark for primary health care worldwide.

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, PUMCH shared its best practices in the prevention, control, and treatment of the disease with the world.

Medical workers at PUMCH participated in the development of international guidelines and agreements, and published academic findings on the diagnosis, treatment, and pathogenesis of this disease, which provide significant reference for medical practitioners in other countries. For example, a paper published by PUMCH in the New England Journal of Medicine was the first in the world to report elevated antiphospholipid antibody titer found in patients with COVID-19, providing effective guidance on clinical treatments such as anticoagulant therapy. PUMCH experts were invited to a press conference held by the State Council Information Office to share their experience in diagnosing and treating critically ill patients with COVID-19. The special telemedicine program “COVID-19 Frontline,” joined by PUMCH and experts from more than 10 countries, gained great attention and was viewed more than 100 million times.

PUMCH bridges China and the rest of the world via medical science exchanges. During a week-long event celebrating the opening of the hospital, approximately 280 experts and scholars from all over the world saw the height of international academic exchanges. As well-known scholars from various countries come to serve at PUMCH and its young and middle-aged talents study abroad, communication has been strengthened between the hospital and the international academic community. In recent years, PUMCH has been promoting practical cooperation with the Mayo Clinic, the University of Chicago, and many other institutions, actively participating in medical and health cooperation programs of the Belt and Road Initiative, and carrying out extensive online and offline international academic exchanges. It has also been strengthening exchanges and cooperation with the World Health Organization and other international bodies to establish its presence in the international medical community.
PUMCH’s Contribution to Modern Medicine and Health Care in China

A consensus reached in the medical history community of China is that the history of PUMCH covers half the history of modern medicine in China. PUMCH not only birthed modern medicine in China but also blazed new trails in scientific medicine. Over the past 100 years, PUMCH has fostered around 100 medical masters and exerted significant impact on the development of modern medicine in China. These masters overcame difficulties of complex and severe diseases, conducted original studies, and led the development of numerous medical disciplines and practices.

Edwardly, PUMCH has featured multidisciplinary team diagnosis and treatment. The grand rounds of internal medicine, clinical pathology seminars, and multidisciplinary consultations have been implemented since the founding of PUMCH. Since 2010, to better play its guiding role in the diagnosis and treatment of complex and severe diseases, PUMCH has set up 27 consultation centers for such diseases to integrate the forces of multiple departments and to improve the diagnosis and treatment capacity of complex and severe diseases as well as rare diseases. PUMCH’s Case Mix Index rating is the highest in China. It has also been focusing on Internet Hospital construction to build a telemedicine platform to connect the entire country and even the whole world. In 2018, PUMCH founded the China Rare Disease Alliance. A year later, PUMCH became the only national-level leading hospital on the National Collaborative Network for Diagnosis and Treatment of Rare Diseases. PUMCH has built a national data platform, a cohort research platform, a multidisciplinary consultation platform, a national quality control center, and a national key laboratory to establish and continuously improve the diagnosis, treatment, support, and research system for rare diseases in China, securing the life and health of patients with these diseases.

As a state-level research hospital, PUMCH has the social responsibility to advance medicine and technological innovation, with the focus on solving clinical challenges. This can be seen from many first successful operations in China such as esophagectomy and pancreaticoduodenectomy, to the systematic study of pituitary, pancreatic, and other complex diseases. Also, it has created many new clinical disciplines and developed new norms, standards, and guidelines accordingly. Numerous “firsts in China” can be found here, and papers with state-of-the-art clinical studies have been published in the New England Journal of Medicine, Science, Nature, and more. By now, 10 national quality control centers and 29 key laboratories and research centers have been established at PUMCH, and a holistic scientific research system of “basic medical research, clinical treatment, and translational medicine” is taking shape to build more departments into national-level data centers and diagnostic and treatment centers in order to succeed as leaders in their fields.

During the hospital’s beginnings, PUMCH took the lead in establishing a rigorous, standardized, and international medical education model, a high-level nursing education model, and a resident training system in China. Its excellent culture and tradition have helped cultivate many outstanding medical professionals in China, becoming the cradle of medical doctors and academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Recently, PUMCH has led the establishment of the China Consortium of Elite Teaching Hospitals for Residency Education. The concept of the residents’ core competency has been well received by the medical community. It has also pioneered postdoctoral programs in clinical medicine in China and innovated the model to train versatile medical elites. The best practices of PUMCH have been taken as institutional arrangements by the state for training top-notch medical professionals. A relatively complete modern hospital management system has been formed by PUMCH as it keeps developing, setting a good example for modern hospital management in China. In the 1980s, China’s national health service reform started from PUMCH. At the beginning of the 21st century, PUMCH took the lead in China to carry out performance assessment according to this standard: “the doctors will be evaluated by what the patients need.” It manages the hospital with the notion that “patients’ satisfaction is the source of employees’ happiness.” A series of systems to ensure the quality of medical care and patient safety have been developed by PUMCH and widely applied to other hospitals in the country. PUMCH is the pioneer of modern medical record management in China, with more than four million medical records kept since its founding. It is known for keeping medical records for the longest time, having the largest number of medical records of famous people, and managing medical records in the most standard and efficient way. To celebrate its 100th anniversary, PUMCH has put forward the Six Systems plan, which is regarded as a road map to promote high-quality hospital development. In the research on establishing modern hospital management systems, the State Council stated that PUMCH’s concept of adhering to public welfare, mobilizing enthusiasm, respecting science, and cultivating humanity should be widely applied across the country. PUMCH has always been living up to its duties as the “national team” for health care and as the pacesetter among public hospitals with deep sense of responsibilities for the country. Right after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, in response to the country’s call, PUMCH sent a large number of experts to various places to support the nation’s medical and health service. They served as pioneers and founders in dozens of medical schools, scientific research institutions, and hospitals and had a far-reaching influence on China’s medical and health development. For several decades, PUMCH has been extending support to health care sectors at the grassroots level and in remote areas. Its rural medical teams’ footprints covered more than 60 localities in 19 provinces and municipalities in the 1960s and 1970s. Six teams comprising a total of 56 PUMCH medical professionals have been sent to Tibet to provide medical care since 2015. With targeted aid programs such as Medical Teams That Never Leave, PUMCH has greatly improved the standard of medical care in these areas. PUMCH has recently implemented the state plan to offer medical assistance to Macau by setting up the Macau Medical Center of Peking Union Medical College Hospital. PUMCH also undertakes the responsibility to provide medical services for public health emergencies and host diplomacy events and other major activities. It successfully fought SARS in 2003 by sending 2,306 medical workers to the front line. During the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, it excellently completed many medical support tasks. When COVID-19 broke out in 2020, it sent the largest national medical team of 196 people to Wuhan and provide quality care in the treatment of critically ill patients, and team members shared their experience with medical practitioners all around the world.
Since its founding, PUMCH has been striving to provide quality care and excellent service for its patients. With its persistent spirit, noble medical ethics, advanced medical skills, and rigorous studies, PUMCH has made significant progress in specialty development, clinical care, talent training, technology development, management innovation, culture promotion in its history of the first century.

Sticking to its motto of “all for the people and all for the patient,” and improving people’s well-being and boosting medical development, PUMCH is striving to achieve its goal of building a world-class hospital with Chinese characteristics as it embarks on its journey toward the next centennial. PUMCH is aiming to become the international center of advanced medicine, technology innovation, medical science research, medical talents training, medical international exchanges, and hospital management demonstration by 2035 in order to be a birthplace of new concepts, models, and strategies in the fields of life and health.

In summary, PUMCH will embrace the global medical community with an open mindset. It shall strengthen exchanges and cooperation with world-class medical, educational, and academic institutions, balancing the advantages and building win-win partnerships, to jointly explore new paths for the development of human health. PUMCH not only blossoms in China, but also brings its blossom to the world.