

# CHINA'S SELFLESS RURAL DOCTORS:

## Success and happiness redefined



Despite his leg impairment, rural doctor Yin Chuanbo often climbs up and down mossy stone steps to pay regular visits to local villagers in the mountainous Guzhen Village in Hubei Province. — All photos by Xinhua

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I suffered from poliomyelitis, an infection causing nerve injury, when I was only 10 months old. My family was poor then, so I did not get timely treatment. Since I have been ‘soaked in rain,’ I wish to hold an umbrella for others.

**Yin Chuanbo**

Rural doctor



Liu Qingmin (center), a rural doctor in Shandong Province who has served villagers for more than 40 years, chats with elderly villagers.

**Wang Yong**

It's supposed to be rest time at noon, but he hardly takes any rest. With a wooden crutch under his right arm and a medical kit in his left hand, he climbs up and down mossy stone steps along swampy country roads in the middle of a mountain, where many elderly villagers live.

This is the routine of Yin Chuanbo, a 38-year-old rural doctor who trudges through a 12-square-kilometer lakeside village day in and day out despite his leg impairment. Many of the 1,100 residents inhabiting the mountainous Guzhen Village, nestling in a lake area in central China's Hubei Province, are “empty-nest” elders whose children live far away from them. Yin takes it upon himself to take care of the health of these old villagers.

A challenge for Yin, who suffered from poliomyelitis when he was a little baby, is that the villagers live far apart from each other — some in the middle of the mountain and others tucked away at different bays along a zigzag shoreline.

It's a picturesque and pristine place, which boasts a forest coverage rate of more than 90 percent, but for elderly patients seeing a doctor often means a long journey. So Yin has chosen to pay regular home visits to all these elderly villagers, especially those suffering from chronic diseases such as high blood pressure and emphysema, a lung condition that causes shortness of breath.

Over the past 17 years since he became a rural doctor, Yin has worn out 24 wooden crutches because of the outpatient visits all year round,

according to a report in China Youth Daily.

Yin's story has fundamentally changed my understanding of what it means to be a doctor. I used to think that seeing a doctor means going to a hospital and getting treated by someone sitting behind a desk, dressed in a medical uniform. Yin certainly also treats his patients at his rural clinic, but in addition to that, he crosses mountains and rivers to provide timely treatment to fragile villagers who live far from his clinic.

# 1.45m

Yin Chuanbo is an epitome of China's 1.45 million rural doctors who work on meager payment to take care of the basic health of hundreds of millions of villagers, many of whom live far from big hospitals in towns or cities.

“Seventeen years’ hard work has won him respect from the villagers, who have given him an honorable nickname — the 120 at their beck and call,” China Youth Daily said in the report.

In China, 120 is a hotline for emergency treatment. Every villager now has Yin's phone number, and he has turned himself into a mobile clinic open round the clock. He does not work shifts; he is available on hand.

This does not mean he can treat all kinds of diseases. Far from that. In difficult cases, he helps refer patients to bigger hospitals outside the village. In any case, he is the

first point of contact for the villagers, who otherwise often have no clue as to how to deal with a medical emergency.

Once on a summer day, Yin got a call for help from an elderly villager, who lived on the opposite side of his clinic across the lake. Hearing that the old farmer did not feel well, Yin rowed a small boat toward the villager's home, as the road condition was rough at the time. In those days, one had to row a boat in a standing position. With a crutch under his arm and waves rising and falling, the doctor soon lost his balance and fell over. He pushed his hands against his weight and finally stood up again.

Such is the hardship Yin has endured over the past 17 years in his relentless effort to answer every call for help from elderly patients. His motive is simple.

“I suffered from poliomyelitis, an infection causing nerve injury, when I was only 10 months old,” he said. “My family was poor then, so I did not get timely treatment.

“Since I have been ‘soaked in rain,’ I wish to hold an umbrella for others,” he said metaphorically.

Yin is an epitome of China's 1.45 million rural doctors who work on meager payment to take care of the basic health of hundreds of millions of villagers, many of whom live far from big hospitals in towns or cities. In many ways, rural doctors are “the last mile” of China's medical service. More often than not, a rural doctor like Yin traverses this “last mile” on foot, literally becoming a mobile clinic available at hand.

And Yin never prescribes expensive medicines for villagers. Last summer, he visited