The microcosm in which bacteria, fungi, and viruses exist is visible only under the (electron-) microscope. The daily work of clinical laboratory physicians is focused on identifying and understanding the threat of these organisms for human health. However, this microscopic world is also full of beauty and artistic patterns (1).

During a recent internship in Peking Union Medical College Hospital, Dr. Yahong Bai from Baoji City People's Hospital of Shaanxi Province, acquired a number of microscopic photos of bacteria. These photos were taken during daily microscopic observation of microbes, including: F. pedrosoi from a specimen of crustacea (Figure 1); E. dermatitidis from a specimen of brain tissue (Figure 2); B. spocofera from a specimen of cerebrospinal fluid (Figure 3); and T richosporon ash from a blood culture (Figure 4). All these specimens are dyed with lactophenol cotton blue by pellet method.

When Prof. Shimin Zhang from Peking Union Medical College Hospital reviewed the photos collected by Dr. Yahong Bai, he observed that the style of these photos is similar to Chinese paintings, he made some editions and added frames with Chinese features. Using four of these panels, a Chinese-painting style image was created, which we named “Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter under the microscope”.

We believe that identifying these artistic features under the microscope reflects the analytic training of a highly experienced physician and the ability to recognize common and unusual patterns in the examined material.

Figure 1 “Spring”; F. pedrosoi from a specimen of crustacea which resembles plum blossom in the Spring.
The identification and analytic understanding of novel and unexpected patterns is critical for advances in the field of microbiology, and in medicine in general.

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

References