The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

治 (radical 治 shui = water) originally means control/eliminate flooding. Ancient hero 大禹 (Da Yu = the-Great-Yu) successfully 治水 (zhi shui = cure-water = implemented anti-flood projects), so he was asked to 治理 (zhi li = cure-manage = rule) the country.


Doctors治病 (zhi bing = cure-illnesses). Operations can 根治 (gen zhi = root-cure = fundamentally/thoroughly cure) ulcers/cancers. However, sometimes patients 不治 (bu zhi = not-cured = die).

by Diana Yue