

Clinical Report 3 (Japan)

Mood Disorder Successfully Treated with Kamishoyosan

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Introduction

The Asian expression "oneness of mind and body" provides a good summary of the powerful relationship between the body and the mind (both cognitive and emotional elements), which is a fundamental principle of Kampo medicine. Modern Western medicine focuses primarily on treatment by medical specialists who focus on a specific organic area. This perspective makes it difficult to understand the relationship between mood disorders and physiological symptoms. In contrast, Kampo medicine looks at mental and physical symptoms that might appear initially to be completely unrelated, and treatment is routinely founded on a unified interpretation of those symptoms. This medical paradigm, which is based on the functions of the five Zang-organs and the six Fu-organs, provides a system of organic unification of mind and body.

The present article describes the clinical course of a patient who presented a primary complaint of emotional instability, accompanied by multiple physical symptoms including dizziness, fatigue, and cold feet. The patient was treated with a preparation of *Modified Back to the Spleen Decoction*, which produced marked improvement. Results are reported below.

Case Report

First visit on January 27, 2006.

The patient was female, 42 years of age and 155.5 cm in height. Body weight was 55.9 kg, and blood pressure was 112/74 mmHg.

Primary complaints:

#1: emotional instability; #2: dizziness; #3: fatigue; #4: cold feet

Medical history:

Appendicitis at age 8, gastric polyps at age 40. Sometimes noticed upper abdominal pain during times of mental stress.

History of present illness:

This patient was married at 26 years of age at which time she moved a considerable distance from her childhood home to live in this region. After her marriage she began to notice occasional episodes of irritation, dizziness, fatigue, and cold feet. From the summer of 2005, these symptoms increased both in frequency and in severity, and were particularly pronounced when the patient was experiencing mental stress. She was not willing to discuss the details of that stress and only mentioned continued mental fatigue from work.

Current symptoms:

Frequently experiencing both irritation and melancholy, easily angered, brooding, unable to make decisions. Reduced activity level, frequent sighing. Stool generally softer than usual, with frequent bouts of diarrhea. Goes to bed at midnight, gets up at 6:30 AM. Without use of sleeping pills, does not usually feel that she has slept well. Stiffness in neck, shoulders, and upper back. Dull pain in right elbow. Cold feet, dislikes air conditioning in summer. Some spasming of facial muscles. Frequent development of aphthae (mouth ulcers). No prior drug therapy.

Menarche at 14 years of age. Menstrual cycle irregular (40 to 90 days). No menstrual pain. Menstrual blood mixed with a small amount of clotting.

Findings from the perspective of Kampo medicine:

<<Observation of the mind>>

Somewhat lacking in liveliness, expression stiff.

<<Observation of the tongue>>

Tongue proper: Somewhat pale

Tongue fur: Thin white, thin

Shallow teeth marks, pattern of shallow fissures.

No overswelling of the sublingual vein.

<<Pulse diagnosis>>

"Taut" pulse, somewhat thready. Pulse 66 bpm, regular.

Analysis of pathology from the perspective of Kampo medicine

The pale tongue with the pattern of fissures and the thin pulse reflect blood deficiency. Years of staying up

late at night and stress-related fatigue had made this patient prone to mental stress. Of the five viscera, the liver in particular showed blood deficiency. Stress caused ki flow to stagnate in the liver, resulting in mood swings. Therefore, the patient became angry easily and noticed feelings of irritation. She also experienced feelings of melancholy and had difficulty in making decisions. The sighing and reduction in activity level reflect the reduced level of ki flow through the liver. The liver has the attribute of wind which causes physical symptoms characterized by movement such as dizziness, facial muscle spasm, and tremor. The experience of cold, limited to the feet and not involving the torso, reflected the failure of ki energy to reach the extremities.

Aphthae and upper abdominal pain due to mental stress reflected the effects of ki energy stagnation in the liver, extending to the spleen. The mouth is thought to reflect the condition of the spleen.

Treatment:

To augment blood to the liver, improve the flow of liver ki, and balance the functions of the liver and spleen.

Prescription:

Kamishoyosan 7.5 g/day (ordinary adult dose), taken in the form of 2.5 g before each meal, a total of 3 times daily, for 11 days.

Clinical Course

Second visit on February 7, 2006.

The patient reported improvement in dizziness, emotional instability, fatigue, and cold feet.

<< Observation of the tongue >>

Tongue proper: Slightly pale.

Tongue fur: Thin white. Shallow teeth marks and pattern of fissures still in evidence.

<<Pulse diagnosis >>

Moderate pulse, somewhat thready. Pulse 66 bpm, regular.

The patient's progress was satisfactory, so the *kamishoyosan* dosage was reduced to 6.0 g/day for the next 21 days.

Third visit on February 28, 2006.

The patient noticed that she continued to experience dizziness when she had insufficient sleep. However, her irritability was markedly reduced. She tired less easily, and when fatigued because of work or for some other reason, she recovered with a good night's sleep. She did not notice any particular experiences of cold feet.

<<Observation of the tongue >>

Tongue proper: Slightly pale

Tongue fur: Thin white, shallow teeth marks remained as noted previously, but pattern of fissures no longer visible.

<<Pulse diagnosis >>

Moderate pulse, somewhat thready. Pulse 72 bpm, regular

Kamishoyosan 6.0 g/day continued for 1 additional month, at which point treatment was concluded.

Discussion

Kamishoyosan was developed from the original *shoyosan* (shoyo-san in Japanese, Xiao-Yao-San in Chinese), a traditional Chinese formulation described in the Chinese national formulary during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 AD). It is called "Xiao-Yao" in Chinese, which literally means "to wander" or "to stroll with no particular location in mind." (The name reflects the many and varied complaints for which this formulation is indicated.) Medical texts from approximately one thousand years ago note that the preparation was already being used to treat a wide range of symptoms at that time. Basically, the indicated medical conditions are congestion of liver ki, blood deficiency, and lack of spleen fortification and movement.

Moutan Cortex and *Gardeniae* Fructus were added to *shoyosan* to produce *kamishoyosan*. Japanese national health insurance covers *kamishoyosan* rather than unmodified *shoyosan*, and the *kamishoyosan* formula has been a favorite of Kampo physicians in Japan for many years. In the last half of the 18th Century, a well-known physician, Tokaku Wada

(1744-1803), wrote in one of his books that this prescription "relieves fire due to excessive yang in the liver and kidneys"¹⁾. In this case, the patient's angry tendencies, such as irritation and a ready temper, corresponded to Wada's "fire due to deficiency", so the modified prescription containing *Moutan* Cortex and *Gardeniae* Fructus are indicated.

Dr. Domei Yakazu (1905-2002), who used *kamishoyosan* in a large number of cases, authored a number of case reports regarding the use of this formulation in the treatment of organic disease such as hepatic cirrhosis, as well as for the treatment of a wide range of conditions that include psychiatric symptoms, such as climacteric disorder and senile depression. For the beneficial effects of this formula in psychosomatic complaints, he coined the term, "Kampo tranquilizer"²⁾.

Summary

This article describes a case in which *kamishoyosan* was efficacious in treating a mood disorder that included physical symptoms. Since Kampo medicine can offer a unified view of illness in some cases where modern medicine would consider psychiatric and physiologic symptoms to be unrelated, and since the forms of modern life and the complexity of our society have immeasurable effects on both the minds and bodies of modern people, it is fortunate that Kampo therapy, initially developed for the people of ancient and medieval times, can also bring impressive health benefits to patients today.

Reference

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