

Clinical Report 4 (Japan)

Treatment of Both Mother and Child with Yokukansan

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Introduction

Yokukansan is a preparation intended to calm an upsurge of liver Qi and the classics contain instructions to treat “both mother and child” (use the preparation for both the mother and the child). In this study we observed a case of improvement induced by treating the mother with *yokukansan*. Later, the child started to crave the mother's Kampo medicine, so that we had no choice but to accept the mother's request for consultation. Observation of the child revealed night crying, fretfulness and other symptoms suggesting that *yokukansan* would be effective. For this reason, both the mother and that child were treated simultaneously with *yokukansan* upon which we observed improvements in both of them. This is an extremely interesting case, since the child apparently had expressed its interest in the treatment with Kampo medicine by herself. We report this experience here as an example of treating both mother and child.

1. Mother: 28 years

Chief complaint: depressive mood, irritation, insomnia, shoulder stiffness etc.

Present illness: At the age of 23 the stress at work and love affair related problems led to a loss of appetite and the development of depressive moods. The patient consulted a psychiatric outpatient clinic, receiving a prescription of psychotropic agents based on the diagnosis of depression, but discontinued the treatment after about one year due to developing side effects. She married at the age of 26, became pregnant the following year and delivered her first child by caesarean section. Since then, the depressive moods and irritation grew worse. The patient consulted our clinic because she was looking for a treatment other than the psychotropic agents.

Anamnesis: At the age of 19 years Guillan-Barré

syndrome. Nothing remarkable in the family history.

Western medical findings: Height 160cm, weight 47kg, blood pressure 110/70 mmHg, chest auscultation and percussion: no anomalies.

Results of laboratory studies: peripheral blood count, biochemical and general urological examinations were all normal.

Kampo medical findings: The tongue body was of faint red color and had a thin white fur. Sublingual veins were engorged. The pulse was thin and wiry. The abdominal pattern showed an intermediate abdominal tension, increased resistance and tenderness in the epigastric region, left-sided fullness, tenderness or discomfort of the hypochondrium, tense abdominal skin, supraumbilical pulsation, paraumbilical tenderness and pressure pain in the ileocecal area.

Oriental medical findings: Cold hands and feet, general malaise, vertigo, dizziness, stiff shoulders, palpitations, anxiety, anorexia, edema of hands and feet, irritation, depression, bitter taste in the mouth, insomnia (difficulties falling asleep and profuse dreaming), constipation, menstruation (irregular, associated with strong pain), copious menstrual flow, abundant fluor genitalis).

Observation of the course

Initial visit: Deficiency of both Qi and blood, associated with stagnation and sluggishness of liver Qi and blood stagnation were considered and therefore 7.5g of *yokukansankachimpihange* extract (divided into 3 portions) administered.

Two weeks later: There was some improvement in the irritation, but constipation and abdominal bloating worsened, so that a *Lactobacillus* preparation and magnesium oxide were added to the prescription.

Four weeks later: There was some improvement in the irritation, but now constipation and diarrhea occurred alternately. For this reason, the *Lactobacillus* preparation and magnesium oxide were discontinued and the prescription switched to 6.0g of *yokukansan*, 4.5g of *Cassia Twig Decoction plus Peony* + 3.0g of *daiokanzoto* (mixture, administered divided into three portions).

Six weeks later: Improvement in mental status and

bowel movements. At this time we were consulted about the female child. According to that consultation, the child grows angry and develops a hot-red face when it does not like certain things, so that the parents are not able to control it. The question was whether this situation could somehow be improved with Kampo medicine. Since the child was eager to take the mother's Kampo medicine, it was given a mouthful to try and did not show any aversion at all. Rather on the contrary, the child seemed to crave the drug.

Eight weeks later: Improvement of the symptoms continued. The child accompanied the mother during her visits.

2. Child: 1 year 8 months, female

Symptoms: Once she started to cry, she began to throw things around, hit things and could not be controlled. She fell easily asleep, but on days in which she encountered certain things or situations she did not like, she started crying at night like she was screaming. She had an active character and did not show any fear of strangers. She tended to be constipated and in particular would not have any bowel movements when away from home. She had an aversion to heat.

Development: Since she was in a breech position, she was delivered through cesarean section (2800g). Fed on artificial milk. Examinations did not reveal any anomalies. Her height was 80cm and her weight 11kg.

First visit and course: Prescription of 2.0g of *yokukansan*.

Two weeks later: The crying at night stopped from the day she started taking the medicine. She did not get sleepy during the day. The drug was mixed with milk or administered during meals dissolved in warm water which she drank with pleasure instead of tea. Later, the course was favorable and she visited our clinic regularly. After the child entered Kindergarten at the age of 4 year, gradually tapering the drug did not lead to any problems, so the therapy of both mother and child was discontinued.

Discussion

The original text describing *yokukansan* was the

"Bao-Ying Cuo-Yao" (Essentials for the Care of Infants; 1555). This text states: "*yokukansan* heals deficiency-heat of liver meridian, the occurrence of convulsions, or development of fever with grinding the teeth, or palpitations with anxiety; clinically irritability manifests in the form of chills and fever, or else a condition where wood overcontrols earth and the patient discharges phlegm and saliva, the abdomen is distended, the patient eats little and has difficulties with sleep. Use 5 fen (about 1.9g) of soft Bupleurum root (Saiko), 8 fen (about 3.0g) of Cnidium rhizome (Senkyu), 1 qian (about 3.8g) of Chinese Angelica root (Toki), Largehead Atractyodes rhizome (Byakujutsu), Tuckahoe (Bukuryo), Gambirplant Hooked Stems and Branch (Chotoko) each and 5 fen (about 1.9g) of Licorice root (Kanzo) prepared in water. This decoction was given simultaneously to both mother and child."

Yokukansan contains the following ingredients and their respective actions are detailed below.
*ingredients (action)

- * *Uncariae Uncis cum Ramulus*
(Calms the Liver and Extinguishes the "Wind")
- * *Bupleuri Radix*
(Spreads Liver qi and relieves constraint)
- * *Cnidii rhizoma*
(Invigorates the blood)
- * *Angelicae Acutilobae Radix*
(Nourishes the Liver)
(Tonifies the blood)
- * *Poria*
(Calm the spirit)
(Promotes urination)
- * *Atractyodis Rhizoma*
(Promotes urination)
- * *Glycyrrhizae Radix*
(Harmonizes the other herbs)

A modified form with added Citri Unshiu Pericarpium and Pinellia tuber is used for worse conditions where the loss of gastric and splenic functions leads to the formation of phlegm. Tokaku Wada (1744-1803) frequently used *yokukansan*, not only for children, but applied it also to adults. For example, in the "Shoso-Hoi-Kai (Medical Formulary

written beside the window shows through Basho Tree)" he exerts: "Cures severe symptoms of excessive anger, insomnia, rash and impatient nature. These symptoms are signs of an upsurging liver Qi. (That means, severe forms of getting easily angry and being irritated because of poor sleep etc. represent the main symptoms. These symptoms are caused by an upsurge of liver Qi.) Moreover, Sohaku Asada (1814-1894) wrote in his "Hutsugo-Yakushitu-Hokan-Kuketsu (Knack of the Formularies of "Don't mistake the Pharmacy" Chamber), "Inquire about anger. When there is anger, this preparation never fails to be effective. (Ask questions as to whether the patient is easily angered. If he/she is, it is unlikely that this formula will work)." Generally speaking, this formula is effective for mental and physical symptoms associated with anger and irritation, night crying, fretfulness not only in infants, but it is also widely effective in adults with neuroses, depression, headache, chronic pain, hemiplegia, demented aggressive elderly and the elderly adult population in general.

In the "Bao-Ying Cuo-Yao (Essential for the Care of Infants)" (1555) it says: "In the care of the infant, treat the nurse as long as diseases have not yet developed, but once the child has already fallen ill, carefully examine and treat the child. Furthermore, it would be best, if both mother and child were treated together." Generally, it is common practice that "the mother is also treated for the purpose of treating the child", but in this case rather the reverse situation applied. Moreover, since the child described in this case report strongly disliked vegetables, we expected the formula to be difficult to administer, because *yokukansan* has a distinct smell of Senkyu (resembling the smell of celery). Yet, in spite of this smell the child even tried to take the medicine from its mother, which makes the case very intriguing.

The mechanisms of action when treating both mother and child include first direct effects and second effects induced through the mother's milk. That means, there are conceivably two psychological effects. Regarding the direct effects, there are the following two well-known case reports in the section on infant diseases of the "Wan Bing Hui Chun (Restoration of

Health from Myriad Diseases); 1587, Vol. 7.

"When small children of less than one month develop convulsions and nasal obstruction, that means they are suffering from common cold. Use the *rikkunshito* with added Platycodi Radix and Asiasari Radix and administer this to both mother and child. (... omission ...) It will clear the nose and stop the convulsions."

"When an infant of less than a month develops convulsions, vomits milk, has a distended abdomen and diarrhea, the cause is adverse effects of milk on the spleen and stomach. Use the *gomiikosan* (*Miraculous Effect Powder with Five Herbs*), add Raponticum uniflorum Radix and give this to the mother. Administration of the drug to the child with a children's spoon eventually leads to a cure."

The mechanisms responsible for improvement in the child when both mother and child are treated, are considered in case of common cold or mastitis, the transfer of antibiotic components through the mother's milk. In case of *yokukansan*, there are naturally direct effects, but the psychological effect of "relaxation of the child through relaxation of the mother" is probably also of major importance. The synergism with this psychological effect does not only apply to parent-child relationships, but could probably also be applied to married couples or the relationship between caregiver and the person being cared for. *Yokukansan* has fewer side effects when compared to western psychotropic agents and thus could conceivably find wide application in our modern, so-called "stressed society".

Summary

When a mother complaining of irritation was treated with *yokukansan*, alleviation of the symptoms had been observed. Moreover, when the child craved to take the mother's medicine, treatment of the infant with the drug improved symptoms of night crying. Since even in the original text describing *yokukansan* treatment of both mother and child is recommended, this was a highly intriguing case.

Reference

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