

## Editorial

### *The Power of Life*

Medicine is made up of theories, techniques, and patients who are the subjects of medicine. However, medical theories and techniques vary according to the times and region.

Modern Western medicine is founded on science. Eastern medicine, on the other hand, is said to be founded not on science. This is because Eastern medicine is based on theories that are unrelated to science, such as the Theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements and the Three Yin and Three Yang Theory.

Nevertheless, among the fields of Eastern medicine, the biological effects of acupuncture and moxibustion have also been regarded in terms of physical stimulus and biological reaction, and have been scientifically studied and supported as well. For example, it was proven in the 1980s that acupuncture stimulation has an effect on promoting the secretion of  $\beta$ -endorphin, and ongoing studies that have continued from the mid-19th century to today have shown that acupuncture and moxibustion has an impact on autonomic nerves (such as the somato-visceral reflex increasing the functions of internal organs). In other words, while acupuncture and moxibustion are said to be therapies founded on unscientific theories, they also have physiological effects that can be scientifically proven.

From an academic perspective, it might be meaningful to question the meaning of the efficacy of acupuncture and moxibustion therapy by asserting it as a science on the grounds of the biological effects of their physical stimulation. In fact, it is well known that the world of acupuncture and moxibustion in Japan after World War II was particularly focused on establishing scientific acupuncture and moxibustion therapies. In post-war Japan, being scientific was a requirement for academic excellence, so proving the efficacy and value of acupuncture and moxibustion in scientific terms had no doubt been necessary for asserting their existence, in light of their historical, legal and social status in Japan.

However, the significance of acupuncture and moxibustion today is not necessarily conditioned on clarifying whether they can be scientifically proven or not. Acupuncture and moxibustion emerged 2000 years ago as medicine of the ancient Chinese people. They were not only meant to treat illnesses, but also noted that the way in which people spend their daily lives is directly related to preventing illnesses. Historically, this precise thinking (“the concept of health”) underlay the spreading of acupuncture and moxibustion in Japan. *Kissa-yojoki* (Treatise on Drinking Tea for Health), written by Eisai in the early 13th century, and *Yojokun* (The Book of Life-nurturing Principles), written in the early 18th century by Kaibara Ekiken, were instrumental to spreading the concept. Eisai writes from his capacity as a Buddhist monk who acquired a mastery in Zen, and Ekiken writes from the perspective of health as regarded in Eastern medicine. It is significant that Ekiken wrote from the standpoint of Eastern medicine. *Yojokun* consists of eight volumes, and in the 8<sup>th</sup> volume with the first half written on the basics of the body and health theories, and the latter half on treatment using Kampo, acupuncture and moxibustion. Indeed, the weight placed on the meaning of health and specific methods of staying healthy differ according to treatment. What Ekiken emphasized the most was that, in life it is important to know one's own body, and to know how to live and how not to become ill.

Herein lies the reason why giving scientific grounds to Eastern medicine is not an overriding concern. Without depending on sciences, Eastern medicine more importantly teaches how to maximize one's power to live and power to stay healthy, how to eliminate elements that act negatively on one's efforts to maximize those powers, and how to reconcile the natural and social environments and one's power of life.

**Shuichi Katai**

Associate Editor of the Journal of KAIM

National University Corporation

Tsukuba University of Technology