

Editorial

Kampo Medicine and Clinical Pearls

Medicine of the Ming Dynasty, introduced from China to Japan in the mid 16th century, was the mainstream of Japanese medicine for about 200 years thereafter. However, just after its introduction, many doctors created their own Clinical Pearls and applied them for diagnosis and treatment, whereby this medicine gradually began to "Japanize" and subsequent Kampo doctors adopted it. Clinical Pearls of this era were mainly made to understand TCM theory.

When Todo Yoshimasu (1702-1773) appeared in the 18th century, that situation changed completely. He denied the diagnostic treatment system which had used the TCM theory up until that point, and devised a new system which emphasized the indication of prescription.

He diagnosed without using traditional theory and prescribed without using traditional pharmacology. In his case report collection, traditional theory is not seen, only symptoms and prescriptions are noted. So, what were his treatments based on? What he emphasized most was abdominal diagnosis. It is also difficult to understand how he prescribed treatments based on what he wrote.

From many anecdotes, it is clear that he was a very good physician. However, there is no evidence of him using System 2 represented by the TCM theory at all. His clinical reasoning seems to consist almost entirely of system 1 from our present viewpoint.

The people of the generation after Yoshimasu could not understand his system 1 background. So what they did was carefully observe the items necessary for clinical practice, create a useful Clinical Pearl, and then give prescriptions based on that content. As a result, from the late eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century, many Kampo Doctors created a tremendous number of Clinical Pearls.

These Clinical Pearls were studied during the Kampo reconstruction period of the 1930's, and they became the basis of modern Chinese medicine. The research of Clinical Pearl's is indispensable for understanding Japanese herbal medicine. This is because they are the background of System 1.

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