

Foreword

Introduction of Kampo and Acupuncture in Japan

Japan has long-standing historical ties to China and Korea. The traditions of Kampo and acupuncture originally came to Japan from those two nations. However, once in Japan, these therapeutic modalities and medical philosophies developed in uniquely Japanese ways, and over the years have become familiar and comfortable to the Japanese people.

These traditional forms of medical therapy have a long history in Japan, coming originally from China by way of the Korean peninsula, reaching the Japanese islands together with Buddhism in the 6th century. Such traditional practices, both Kampo therapy and acupuncture and moxibustion, were a part of standard medical treatment in Japan until the end of the Edo Period. However, Japan moved toward westernization/modernization in the second half of the 19th century. A rapid introduction of modern Western medicine began with the Meiji Restoration (1868) and traditional Japanese medicine fell into decline. Following World War II, while Japan was under the control of the occupying GHQ, a movement was initiated within the GHQ to ban acupuncture as an unscientific, superstitious, and barbaric form of treatment. This put Japanese traditional medicine at an even greater risk of dying out completely. However, since the time of the Showa Era (1925-1989), there has been an ongoing movement to reinstate some forms of traditional medicine in Japan. Both Kampo medicine and acupuncture therapy have survived and continue to be practiced today.

Because teaching and research in Japanese universities have been based on modern Western medicine since the beginning of the Meiji Era, medical practitioners who are licensed physicians provide treatment from the perspective of modern Western medicine only, and do not generally interact with practitioners of traditional Japanese medicine such as Kampo doctors and acupuncturists. The two traditions continue to exist in parallel, but do not touch.

The shortage of EBM-based scientific evidence for Kampo and acupuncture has made it even more difficult to obtain a fair-minded hearing for Kampo or acupuncture-related research objectives to be added to the Japanese government's research budget. In fact, from the Meiji Restoration until the present day, Kampo and acupuncture have continued to receive a cool reception from the Japanese medical establishment with regard to therapeutic services, as well as in terms of physician training and the overall health care system.

What will be required in order to change this status quo?

First, we must accumulate research that demonstrates the scientific rationale for Kampo and acupuncture from an EBM perspective. We will also need to collect and organize case reports substantiating that research.

Second, it is essential that these Japanese findings be made available for assessment by the international medical community. This will be helpful for the domestic status of traditional Japanese medicine, since Japan tends to be strongly influenced by overseas opinion, particularly from the United States and Europe. Japanese people tend to place more weight on positive evaluations by Europeans and Americans than they do on similar evaluations by other Japanese. This tendency is particularly pronounced in the Japanese academic and medical communities. It is important to obtain a positive assessment from Europe and America even for beneficial Japanese traditions of long standing. This is an important step for revitalizing Kampo and acupuncture in Japan. We hope that this journal will be one means to that end.

Unfortunately the traditions of Kampo and acupuncture, which have been a valuable part of Japanese health care for so many years, are currently failing to receive either unbiased evaluation or fair treatment by the Japanese medical establishment. We hope that through this journal we can help to establish Japanese Kampo and acupuncture as independent from their Chinese and Korean cousins, and that we can contribute in some small way to increasing the understanding of Japanese traditional medicine overseas.

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