

Foreword

Evolving System

Kampo medicine is a unitary system in which diagnosis and courses of treatment are administered as a single process. The Japanese have built this system based on “Shanghanlun” since nearly 300 years ago. As a matter of course, in the backdrop there is TCM that has several thousand years of history.

However, Shanghanlun has unique principles different from those of today’s TCM. Yoshimasu Todo, who was active in the 18th century (1702-1773), did not assimilate the principles of both TCM and “Shanghanlun” into his clinical practice as he could not actually see them practiced before him. Recently efforts are underway to interpret these principles in a fresh light and thereby research of Kampo medicine has entered a new stage.

With the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the new government took the policy to have Kampo medicine step down from the standing as orthodox medicine. However it continued to exist as a private medicine. In recent years, it has started to draw new attention; medical schools have also started to teach Kampo medicine, and the general public shows high levels of interest in Kampo medicine.

What primarily caused such popularity of Kampo medicine is the existence of 148 kinds of extract formulas, instead of decoctions that are trouble-taking in preparation. Such extract formulas were invented by the Japanese as a result of their research efforts over many years since 1940s. As soon as extract formulas - initially viewed as being a little strange products - were approved in 1976 for coverage by the National Health Insurance System, they have spread the most rapidly and now are absolutely necessary in general practices.

Upon introduction of extract formulas into the National Health Insurance System, experts of those days launched a new system construction for Kampo medicine that used extract formulas. They have continuously performed scores of clinical and basic research, and in recent years, a certain measure of completion has been achieved. Even now, varieties of research results are being reported in a stream.

Japanese Kampo medicine is quite different from Chinese TCM in many aspects. It is particularly obvious in the aspect of theories as well as their attitude toward formulas. In a word, TCM of China is enthusiastic about creating new formulas, whereas Japanese Kampo medicine is enthusiastic about how to make good use of a group of formulas for various diseases with the main focus on classical formulas. As a result, enormous amounts of experiences for a single formula have been accumulated and they naturally suggest indications for the formula. For instance, Poria Powder with Five Herbs is markedly effective for migraines under particular conditions and is also specifically effective for acute rotavirus enteritis. It is also used to relieve brain edema in the acute stage of cerebral infraction. Meanwhile it is also used as a hangover medicine.

For each formula, indications are being established one by one, and this step-by-step process configures a system as a whole. Kampo medicine will further substantiate and solidify this system through a great deal of clinical experiences and a lot of basic research.

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