

Editorial

Why necessary to use kampo when doctors have mastered the Western medicine?

In Japan, doctors go through 6 years of education before obtaining a medical license and majority of 2 years for training to acquire the Western medicine. Although the education of medical students requires taking kampo for the past few years, kampo education has not become standardized and in-depth knowledge of kampo is not necessarily required to obtain a medical license. Additionally, perception about the kampo treatment has not been unified in the medical community of Japan. However, doctors voluntary learning kampo have increased in recent years and over 70% of doctors have prescribed kampo.

In Japan, why doctors spend a lot of time learning kampo and use it for medical treatment although they have already mastered the advanced Western medicine using the modern science?

The greatest benefit of kampo is that doctors can provide treatment based on a symptom given by a patient even when it was difficult to identify the name of sickness defined in the Western medicine. For kampo, disease name is not needed for treatment because it has different medical theory. This is very useful in clinical practice. Unknown symptoms and clinical condition can be linked and it could be a way to settle each individual difference, meaning that it can easily correspond with individual differences of patients.

The second benefit is the distinct medical approach that kampo utilizes patient's condition all together such as physical and psychological symptoms, as well as genetic factor, gender difference, and environment factor. This approach is a basic of the kampo treatment. It makes up for disadvantages of the Western medicine and also helps to promote trust with patients.

The third is that number of dosage can be decreased because one prescription of kampo can correspond with broad symptoms. It would help to increase compliance.

Additionally, it should be highlighted that kampo can provide treatment that can increase physical energy and promote immunity. By increasing the physical energy and stabilizing body's internal environment, standard medical remedy can be reduced. This approach is used especially for treating insomnia and mental instability.

On the other hand, process of kampo treatment requires medical providers and patients to use the five sensory organs. Utilization of the five sensory organs seems to promote vital activities and motivation and helps to stabilize mental conditions of patients. Patients have to actively participate in treatments to promote their five senses. Positive attitude of patients can lead to better treatment selection and increase satisfaction and help to conduct other treatment smoothly.

However, it is difficult to present in numerical terms the effectiveness of medical quality. It can be influenced majorly by subjective findings such as palpation and visual examination, as well as externalized feedback of patients. I agree to perform semi quantitative studies such as highly reliable RCT to determine diagnostic approach and effectiveness of kampo remedy. However, it is difficult to randomize and apply double blind to achieve treatment method and specificity of medicine. Additionally, kampo remedy is a multi-component complex and not medicine designed from a single component. It is difficult to decide primary or secondary based on each outcome. Although kampo remedy has been studied to collect cases for a long period of time, it is considered that reliability level is low for those cumulated cases. It has just started to evaluate kampo based on highly-reliable clinical research and we are still looking for methods of clinical research suitable for kampo. In order to clarify the effectiveness of kampo remedy that contains unknown constituent, a qualitative testing could be useful, which works to create a hypothesis during research or after research.

We must unify the kampo treatment with the Western medicine based on the evaluation of the clinical study and create better medical sector.

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