

Editorial

Best Part of Formulating Kampo Medicine

Japanese Kampo medicine, which is based on “Shang Han Lun” and “Jinkui Yaolue,” has been producing good results in the treatment of chronic disorders like osteoarthritis of the knee as well as acute diseases like influenza by adding its own inventions and innovations to the formulations described in these classical writings.

Crude drugs constituting the formulations for these diseases are varied and abounding while about 200 kinds are kept available at each pharmacy specialized in prescriptions of Kampo medicine. Medicinal substances for everyday use are limited to 50 to 60 kinds. Of them, cassia twig, peony, licorice root, Chinese date, ginger, bupleurum root, and ephedra perform critical roles and are essential in the pharmacy’s drug cabinet.

Ephedra is the main ingredient of *maoto*, the first-line choice for influenza and it is also contained in *kakkonto* generally used for common cold. Ephedra takes a key role in the two formulations of *keishishakuyakuchimoto* used for chronic rheumatoid arthritis and *eppikajutsuto* used for osteoarthritis of the knee. Unless *shoseiryuto* and *maobushisaishinto* were available, how could allergic rhinitis be cured? Unless *makyokansekito* was available for the treatment of the early stage bronchitis and bronchial asthma, how could these diseases be handled?

There are many crude drugs that contain alkaloid that has strong actions such as ephedra. For example, many pathological conditions can only be cured with aconite that is composed mostly of aconitine. On the other hand, prescriptions made by combining crude drugs of relatively weak actions can provide remarkable benefits. For example, licorice, wheat, and Chinese date are the main components of *kambakutaisoto* that has sedative effects and they are edibles and flavors in our everyday living.

In this way, Kampo prescriptions are formulated under given rules by combining various substances that have strong actions and/or those ordinarily contained in foods in consideration of their individual medicinal effects. To cure diseases using such prescriptions is one of the best parts of Kampo medicine.

For this, minimum required drugs need to be lined up. Unlike in China, more than 600 kinds of drugs are not necessary in Japan since prescriptions from “Shan Han Lun” and “Jinkui Yaolue” are mainly applied. At most 200 kinds are sufficient, with which different prescriptions are formulated for various diseases.

Tokaku Wada (1742-1803) who was a good doctor in Japan of nearly 200 years ago said as follows: “the medical technique of a doctor who uses a plenty of prescriptions becomes shoddy whereas the one of a doctor who uses chosen few prescriptions becomes precise.”

Japanese Kampo doctors and practitioners like his words more than a little.

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