

Editorial

Acupuncturist Training – Present Situation and Initiatives

The environment for acupuncture and moxibustion training in Japan changed significantly ten years ago this year. Until 2000, only 26 nationwide universities and vocational schools provided such training, and every year, around 2,200 applicants from a total of 2,700 passed the national exam required to practice acupuncture and moxibustion. Following a relaxation of regulations, thereafter, universities and vocational schools for acupuncturist training increased to 100 schools on a nationwide scale as of April 2010, and as many as 4,000 applicants from a total of 5,300 passed the national exam held in February 2010. This means that the increase in the number of educational institutions that train acupuncturists brought an almost two-fold increase in the number of qualified acupuncturists compared to ten years ago.

However, the change in the environment for acupuncture and moxibustion training generated a number of issues. One is the issue of employment after graduation, and the other is the decline in the technical level of practitioners.

Acupuncturists have the choice of going into private practice, but few people actually do so immediately upon graduation. Instead, most choose to receive practical training at an established clinic to first accumulate experience in treating patients. Under current circumstances, however, there are not enough clinics in Japan to provide employment to 4,000 acupuncturists per year. At the same time, many of these new acupuncturists need to acquire practical skills at a clinic and build up confidence to treat patients, because schools that have newly begun to offer acupuncture training tend to place emphasis on providing knowledge over technical skills in preparing students for the national exam, which does not include technical evaluation.

In response to this situation, the acupuncture and moxibustion industry in Japan established the Acupuncture and Moxibustion Medical Promotion Society in 2006 to take on various initiatives related to awareness raising of acupuncture and moxibustion, the study of acupuncture and moxibustion, and training of acupuncturists.

Under the theme of “awareness raising,” the society engages in diverse activities to promote understanding of acupuncture and moxibustion in Japan, and under the “study” theme, it collects information about the treatments. For “training,” the society endeavors to establish a training system for new acupuncturists who have acquired a license but whose skills level is still low. These activities are not expected to produce immediate results, but are gradually helping to transform the acupuncture and moxibustion industry in Japan.

Noboru Mitsuata
Goto College of Medical Arts and Sciences
Advanced Course in Clinical Pedagogy
Tokyo Eisei Gakuen College