

Editorial

Clinical Applications and Key Signs

A single Kampo medicine may be applicable to various clinical conditions and diseases. For example, *goreisan* (*Poria Powder with Five Herbs*) may be prescribed for a vast range of clinical conditions including infectious gastroenteritis, edema diseases, and even headaches, hangovers, dizziness and abdominal pain. The *Shokanron* (Treatise on Cold Damage) reveals that *goreisan* was also used for certain dehydration conditions. It mentions the occurrence of post-perspiration dry mouth as a reaction to taking *goreisan*, and provides instructions on drinking plenty of warm water after taking *goreisan*. In Japan, these conditions are generally thought to be caused by so-called “water poisoning,” or abnormal water metabolism in the body. As *goreisan* is a representative prescription for treating water poisoning, it is thus considered effective against the above-mentioned conditions. Most textbooks describe *goreisan* as being effective against edema of the extremities, a typical symptom of water poisoning, and headaches and abdominal pains accompanied by such symptoms as thick tongue plaque or dry mouth.

However, in actual clinical practice, there are many cases where *goreisan* is ineffective even if such symptoms are observed, or conversely, cases where *goreisan* is effective although no signs of water poisoning are observed. Outstanding studies that aim to solve such issues have begun to appear in recent years. It has been found that *goreisan* is effective against migraine headaches that are induced by changes in atmospheric pressure, but has no significant correlation with other signs.¹ It has also been found that abdominal pains which may be treated with *goreisan* are practically unrelated to other signs, and that *goreisan* is effective against abdominal pains that are induced by eating or drinking cold foods such as ice and ice cream during the summer.² Such findings indicate that even with *goreisan* alone, the signs for identifying the responder may differ for each clinical application. It may be said that efforts to deduce the signs for identifying the responders of actual clinical applications of Kampo prescriptions beyond the bounds of conventional practices and concepts, are necessary for the advancement of future studies of Kampo medicine and enhancement of clinical performance. Moreover, such efforts also increase the possibility of discovering a clue to solving the essence of clinical conditions that prescriptions aim to treat. With regard to the examples given in relation to *goreisan*, there emerges the possibility that headaches occur when a drop in atmospheric pressure causes a change in pressure inside the skull and ultimately causes a dilation of the blood vessels in the head and edema in surrounding areas.³ There is also the possibility that abdominal pains are caused when cold foods stimulate and induce edema of the stomach lining. This writer has in fact also seen *goreisan* have a complete response to strong upper abdominal pains from edema of the lining of the stomach and duodenum accompanying advanced portal hypertension. When considering the above, it seems that *goreisan* acts against edema in various organizations of the human body. It is hoped that such mechanisms will come to be further elucidated.

- 1) Haimoto, H. et al.: Observations pertaining to the correlation between the clinical epidemiology of chronic headache and migratory cyclones (case-control study of patients for whom the treatment with *goreisan* had been effective or ineffective). *PHYTO* 1:8-15, 1999.
- 2) Kimura, Y. et al.: Investigation of Clinical Indications of Goreisan in Patients with Epigastralgia in the Summer Season. *Kampo Medicine* 61:722-726, 2010.
- 3) Mukamal KJ et al.: Weather and air pollution as triggers of severe headaches *Neurology*. 2009;72:922-7

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