



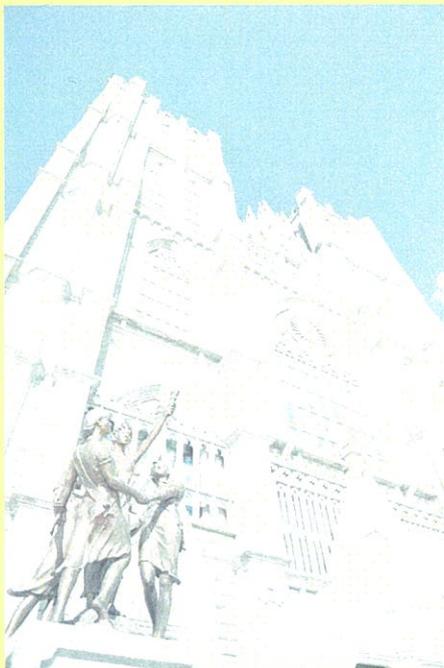
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Status and Prospect of Integrative Medicine in Japan

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Basically, Western biomedicine is directed toward reductionism. The foremost reduction is the DNA and RNA. Through the observation of this kind of reductionism, people now know that the accumulation of factors can not describe the whole body system. On the contrary, Oriental philosophy is comprehensive and relative. In this sense, sometimes the definition is vague and therefore often criticized by Western thought. For example, essential concepts of East Asian Traditional Medicine, which are individualized, comprehensive and patient oriented. These subjective described methods are not persuasive to a biomedicine community and as in fact, most Western physicians think that it is impossible to create a shared platform between Western biomedicine and traditional medicine.

Current Japanese health care system demonstrates the partial integration of traditional medicine and Western biomedicine. According to data from 2008, 83.5% of physicians use Kampo medicine in Japan. Kampo medicine is based on ancient Chinese medicine, which was transmitted during the 6th century via the Korean peninsula and evolved especially in the Edo period (1603-1867). During the Edo period, Kampo theory was simplified and became more pragmatic. For example, the number of diagnostic patterns, i.e., SHO (証) is very limited in Kampo medicine. Also, abdominal findings are important as a diagnostic procedure in Kampo medicine.

The turning point of Kampo in Japan was 1967, when four Kampo formula were listed in the national health insurance system. Since then, Western physicians has been using Kampo formula in daily practice. However, to some extent, Kampo medicine has lost its traditional way of use. Because Kampo education is not enough in medical school and in the course of continuous medical education in Japan, most physicians use Kampo medicine as an alternative Western medicine, but not refer to the traditional diagnostics. We should seek for the ideal integration of Kampo and Western medicine for a better health care in future.