Message from the President

The Japan Society of Acupuncture and Moxibustion (JSAM) is the leading academic organization of acupuncture and moxibustion in Japan. It is the only organization in Japan that has been authorized corporate status (approved on 1 April 1980 under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). The aim of the Society stated in 2008 is "to be the Society that contributes by nurturing youthful power, filled with youthful vigor".

As of 31 March 2010, the society had approximately 5,000 members consisting of practitioners of acupuncture and moxibustion (official national accreditation name is "acupuncturist" or "moxibustionist" respectively). Membership also includes persons who are interested in Acupuncture & Moxibustion Medicine such as physicians, dentists, medical and scientific researchers and acupuncture students.

The Society holds academic conferences every year in various locations of Japan. Presentations are made concerning basic research, clinical studies, and social medicine research of Acupuncture & Moxibustion Medicine. National and international information on acupuncture and moxibustion is delivered at the conferences. The scale of the congress and its contents continue to expand every year. Additionally, branch offices of the Society provide training sessions as necessary for the Society's accreditation.

Furthermore, the Society invites researchers from various countries for international symposiums.

The Japanese developed a unique superficial acupuncture method in the 1,500 years since acupuncture was introduced from China. In recent years comparative research has incorrectly labeled superficial acupuncture as "sham acupuncture." Because of no significant differences in trials between true acupuncture and sham acupuncture it was said that "acupuncture is a placebo." The methodology is incorrect to consider superficial acupuncture a sham, on the contrary, it is a true acupuncture.

Acupuncture and Moxibustion Medicine has a role to raise questions about how the new medical system should be in the current Western Medicine centered world. Some keywords and phrases are as follows: focus on the curative power of nature, mind-body unity, holistic, general and comprehensive care, individualized medical treatment, individualized medicine, to contribute to improving patients' complaints, less harmful, caring medicine with physical touch, high cost performance, etc.

Certainly, Acupuncture and Moxibustion Medicine is an "Eco medicine" which is in keeping with WHO's saying "ensure proper use of traditional medicine as an important component contributing to the health of all people."

Shuji Goto Ph.D.
President of JSAM

What is Japanese Acupuncture?
Development of Acupuncture and Moxibustion treatment in Japan

Acupuncture and moxibustion treatment which originated in China was introduced to Japan via the Korean peninsula. Since Japan has benefited from it 1500 years ago, it has been developing with our ancestors’ ingenuity.

Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion treatment developed through academic exchange among three countries (Japan, China, and Korea)

Publications and technology imported from China contributed much to the development of Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion treatment.

Based on these benefits, original medical systems were established resulting in the publications of "Tahim-po" by TANBANO Yasuyori (内藤与次郎, 584), "Ketsushin" by MANASE Dossai (前座信, 1574), "Shinkyusyu-yo" by YAMAMOTO Goenou (山本光男, 1676) in Japan.

About 4,000 medical books were imported from Japan to China, among these were Chinese medicine texts reimported to China of which the only extant copies existed outside China, and Japan was one of the countries where they existed. Also, included in these were 751 Japanese original medical texts. These Japanese works which were exported to China between the Meiji and Showa period (1868–1988) and Korean texts to China, as well, appears to have had considerable influence on modern Chinese medicine. These three countries, Japan, China and Korea have been developing each medical system through their medical exchanges.

Unique Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion treatments

In Japan, many schools came into existence especially since the 16th century. They devised unique treatment methods and techniques. Here are some examples which are practiced even today.

1) Abdominal examination
Since latter part of the 16th century, Japanese original abdominal examinations which examine the whole body system have been developed.

2) Invention of the guide tube
SUGIYAMA Waizuki (1610-1694) made a comprehensive compilation of one of the acupuncture techniques, which is called Kanshinbo technique and it uses a guide tube. By the end of the 19th century, Japanese original acupuncture techniques and equipments were developed and systematized rapidly through the books like "Sugiyama shinpen-ryu" compiled by SHIYAMA Wadezki and others.

3) Japanese moxibustion treatment and "refined moxa floss"
By the 18th century (middle of Edo period), "refined moxa floss" was developed which burns at a low temperature.

Moxibustion commonly practiced in Japan minimizes the heat pain and burning by making the minimum size moxa cone. It aims to minimize the invasiveness to patients and is classified into diathermic moxibustion which burns the moxa cone completely and heat sensation moxibustion which burns the moxa cone but stops burning before it burns completely (non-scarring moxibustion).

4) Acupuncture to infants and little children
Since about the 18th century, non-penetrating acupuncture methods for infants and little children have come into practice which comparatively slightly stimulate the surface of the skin. Needles with various shapes were devised.

5) Intradermal needle
AKABANE Koseki devised the Intradermal needle in the middle of the 20th century (middle of Showa period). A very short needle is placed parallel to and with the tip under the skin and secured with a bandage for a day or some days. He also invented the meridian diagnosing method using measurement of the sensitivity to heat at finger tips (well points).

Licensing for Acupuncturists in Japan

Only licensed physicians, licensed acupuncturists, and licensed moxibustionists in Japan may provide acupuncture and moxibustion treatment in Japan.

The license of an acupuncturist or moxibustionist is specific to that person and to that field of practice. (Legislation No. 217, Article 1, December 20, 1947)

Requirements

Applicants must have graduated from an acupuncture and moxibustion school or a center for the visually impaired, recognized by the Japanese Ministry for Health, Labor, and Welfare or from a university or from a special support school for the visually impaired recognized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology.

Current status of the national examination

Although there was a local qualifying examination conducted by each prefectural government, since 1993 only a national examination is given under the auspices of the MEWL, and is administered by the Foundation for Training and Licensing Examination in Amma Massage-Acupressure, Acupuncture, and Moxibustion.

The examination covers the following areas. Topics for the acupuncturist or moxibustionist examination (general medical treatment, sanitation, public health, related legislation, anatomy, physiology, general pathology, introduction to clinical medicine, particulars of clinical medicine, rehabilitation medicine, general theory of Eastern medicine, general theory of the meridians and acupuncture points, clinical theory in Eastern medicine). In addition, acupuncture theory for the acupuncturist examination and moxibustion theory for the moxibustionist examination.