

## The Special Characteristics of Japanese Kampo Medicine

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Kampo Medicine is the traditional herbal medicine of Japan with a history of more than 1500 years. Originating in China, the administration of herbal prescriptions had been the established medicine in Japan for centuries until it lost its predominance to Western medicine towards the end of the 19th century. Recent decades saw a revival of Kampo which took place within the context of modern Western medicine. Main indications today are disease patterns caused by modern industrial society, such as chronic and degenerative diseases, functional and psychosomatic disorders and the multiple diseases of the elderly. The historical development and the gradual integration of Kampo into modern medicine helped to shape unique features which are characterized as follows:

Kampo has preserved its traditional individual and holistic therapeutic approach with regard to clinical practice. The traditional herbal formula on the one side and the complaints of the patient and his subjective symptoms on the other side are central. Therapy does not focus on a single plant but on a well composed defined traditional formula, following the concept that the perfect combination of herbs leads to synergistic and manifold effects as well as a higher tolerability of the prescription. The Kampo-specific abdominal palpation (*fukushin*), tongue inspection and pulse diagnosis provide further information about the stage of the disease and the constitution of the patient. This set of symptoms and bodily informations is combined to an individual symptom profile, a Kampo diagnosis (*shō*), which leads to the selection of the appropriate prescription with the corresponding efficacy profile (*hō*).

Kampo is today considered not as an alternative treatment but as a complementary therapeutic option to enhance the quality of modern health care in defined areas. Only examined physicians are allowed in Japan to prescribe traditional medication which stands in contrast to other Asian countries. In most cases, Kampo drugs are applied in addition to a modern medical regimen. The Japanese National Health Insurance is covering ethical Kampo drugs since 1976.

Modern day publications and therapy manuals on Kampo medicine as well as the coming implementation of Kampo diagnostic patterns into ICD-11 reveal a trend to standardize traditional diagnostic procedures, to explain the Kampo terminology and to clearly determine indications, benefits, and risks from the viewpoint of modern medicine.

During recent decades, extensive research has been conducted in the fields of basic and clinical research and a standard regarding quality of crude drugs and extract products has been developed. Respecting tradition is not necessarily a contradiction to modernization. The ongoing modernization of Kampo medicine prepares the way for the internationalization of this form of therapy on a rational basis.

### Short CV

Heidrun **Reißweber-Hewel**, MD, PhD; M.A. in Japanese Studies; board specialist in Internal medicine and in Gastroenterology. 1994-1997 JSPS-Humboldt Fellow at the Oriental Medicine Research Center, Kitasato University, Tokyo. 1997-2010 head of the Research Unit for Japanese Phytotherapy (Kampo) at LMU University of Munich, since 2011 Private clinic for Japanese Medicine at Gräfelfing/Munich and Associate Lecturer at the Competence Centre for Complementary Medicine and Naturopathy (CoCoNat), Technical University of Munich. Teaching of Kampo courses at the German Medical Doctors` Association for Acupuncture (DÄGfA). Since 2011 President of the International Society for Japanese Kampo Medicine (ISJKM).