

## Summary of Doctoral Dissertation

Title Differences in attitude and experience between Japanese people towards Kampo medicines and Taiwanese people towards traditional Chinese medicines

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### I. Introduction

Traditional medicine (TM) has a long history and is based on knowledge of theories, beliefs and experiences from different cultures and is used to maintain health and prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illness. Different countries have their own TM systems. In Japan, people use Kampo medicine (KM), whereas in Taiwan, people use traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

Kampo medicines (KMs) are traditional herbal medicines practiced in Japan, and they are based on ancient traditional Chinese medicines. Because there is no national license for traditional medical doctors, Kampo medicinal products are used as part of the conventional medical system in Japan, and KMs are prescribed by medical doctors. On the other hand, at Kampo specialty pharmacies, the pharmacists themselves can prescribe 212 kinds of Kampo preparations as decoctions without the prescription of a medical doctor. Of course, people can purchase over-the-counter (OTC) Kampo products, the majority of which are extracted products.

Traditional Chinese medicines (TCMs) are medicines applied under the guidance of traditional Chinese medicinal theory. In Taiwan, TCMs are still used, and they have a rich history of use, as they align with social and traditional values. In addition, people in Taiwan have the habit of using both Western medicines (WMs) and TCMs. However, within the institutionalized medical system, WMs are mainly prescribed by Western medicine doctors, and TCMs are mainly prescribed by Chinese medicine doctors. On the other hand, people can also purchase over-the-counter (OTC) TCMs at traditional Chinese medicine pharmacies.

In Japan, since the Meiji period, there has been only one kind of doctor, and only doctors can prescribe KMs. However, in Taiwan, there are two types of doctors, one is Chinese medicine doctor and the other is Western medicine doctor (that is, doctor in Japan), and TCMs are mainly prescribed by Chinese medicine doctors. As a result, in fact, there is a big difference between the medical licensing backgrounds of Japan and Taiwan about medicines in traditional medicine system. And this may result in Japanese and Taiwanese people having different usage habits and perceptions of KMs and TCMs. Therefore, we decide to investigate the attitude and experience about Japanese people towards KMs and Taiwanese people towards TCMs, and then we compare their differences.

## II. A survey of Japanese people's attitude to and experience of Kampo medicines

From 2006 to 2008, the Japan Kampo Medicines Manufacturers Association (JKMA)

conducted a survey and reported on the awareness and user experience of KMs among Kampo workshop participants by questionnaire and visitors to the JKMA website online. In 2011, JKMA conducted a street survey and reported on the awareness and user experience of KMs. However, both surveys had some flaws. Because the former was a questionnaire aimed at groups interested in KMs, it cannot represent the views of the wider public on this topic. At the same time, the latter was a street questionnaire, so the number of questions was limited, and the survey focused on the experience of using KMs. Therefore, we decided to conduct a survey that would reflect the views of the general public in Japan. We investigated the general public's attitude, experience, and understanding of KMs through an online questionnaire.

We conducted an online survey of registered members (aged over 25 years) of a research company (Macromill, Inc., Tokyo, Japan) using an online questionnaire administered in 2020. Subjects were adjusted for gender and age to account for demographic dynamics based on the most recent national survey results. In addition, to accord more closely with the general public's thinking in Japan, personnel with medical backgrounds were excluded. Since our purpose was to investigate the public's knowledge and experience of KMs, the participants' interest in KMs, experience in taking them, impressions, access, reasons for purchase, and expectations, etc., were surveyed. All the data were counted and analyzed with Excel, and a weighted analysis was carried out to conform to Japan's current national population dynamics.

A total of 2060 participants answered the questionnaire. Of these, 71% had taken KMs. Among this group, 63.5% obtained KMs through a doctor's prescription, 46.3% purchased KMs through pharmacies, drugstores, over the Internet, or by mail order, and only 11.3% had purchased KMs at Kampo specialty pharmacies. Most of the positive impressions were "Work gently", "Gentle on the body", and "Fewer side effects". And most of the negative impressions were "Slow to take effect" and "Expensive". Among the OTC KMs that had been taken, more than 90% of people had taken "kakkonto", which was effective for colds, including "Caconal". As for the reasons for purchasing OTC KMs, the most reason was that they could be easily used. The main expectations for KMs were that they are easier to choose KMs were cheaper. Although many people have taken KMs, they do not always have an accurate understanding of KMs as medicines. Especially in the case of KMs for prescription, people take them passively and do not have a strong awareness of KMs. In contrast, OTC KMs are widely recognized as drugs. As a result, it is important for medical personnel, KMs manufacturers and pharmacists to make accurate information available.

### III. A survey of Taiwanese people's attitude to and experience of traditional Chinese medicines

In the past, several regional surveys were carried out in various cities in Taiwan, including Taichung, Tainan, Taitung, and Taipei. The purpose of these surveys was to investigate people's medical treatment and medication habits. However, due to their limited scope, these surveys

could not provide a comprehensive understanding of the views of all people in Taiwan regarding TCMs. In addition to regional surveys, national surveys were also conducted in Taiwan. In 2007, a survey was conducted among the public in Taiwan to explore their opinions, awareness, and confidence in TCMs. In 2012, a public survey was conducted to explore the use of TCMs in medical practices in Taiwan. These surveys could reveal the habits and cognitions of most people in Taiwan. However, because the original purpose of the above surveys was to understand whether people have correct medication habits, the surveys themselves were relatively general. Relatively few detailed studies have directly assessed the perspectives and experiences of the participants regarding the TCMs in those surveys. Therefore, in this study, we aimed to explore the attitudes, experiences, and understanding of TCMs, and also to identify the TCMs that are commonly preferred among people in Taiwan.

We modelled the survey on the previous study conducted in Japan in 2020. Therefore, the questionnaire used in Taiwan closely mirrored that of the Japanese survey, with a few modifications made to adapt to the local context. Similarly, the participants' interest in TCMs, experience in taking them, impressions, access, reasons for purchase, and expectations, etc., were surveyed. This survey was carried out in 2022 among preliminarily registered members over the age of 25 in Taiwan by Macromill, Inc., Tokyo, Japan using an online questionnaire. It should be noted that participants who work in healthcare and media were excluded to better align with the

views of the general public in Taiwan. All the data were counted and analyzed with Excel, and a weighted analysis was carried out to conform to Taiwan's current national population dynamics.

There were 518 participants. More than 95% had taken TCMs. Among this group, 87.5% obtained TCMs through a Chinese medicine doctor's prescription, 48.4% purchased TCMs at traditional Chinese medicine pharmacies, 14.4% purchased them through pharmacies, drugstores, over the Internet, or by mail order and less 10% obtained TCMs through a Western medicine doctor's prescription. Most of the positive impressions were "Work gently", "Can improve constitution", and "Fewer side effects", and "Slow to take effect" was the most common negative impression. Among OTC TCMs that had been taken, "Simotsuto", which is used for disorders in women, was the most common, but the use rate of "kakkonto" was very rare. As for the reasons for purchasing OTC TCMs, the most reason was that they could be easily used. The main expectations for TCMs were to help to improve daily health and prevent diseases. Although the participants had a relatively positive impression of and experience with TCMs, but there were still some cognitive blind spots that need to be filled. It is essential to strengthen the publicity and education about TCMs and improve the public's understanding and correct use of TCMs.

IV. Comparison between Japanese people towards Kampo medicines and Taiwanese people towards traditional Chinese medicines

First of all, the results show that more Taiwanese people have experience in taking TCMs than Japanese people in taking KMs. It is obviously that TCMs are more popular in Taiwan than KMs in Japan. About the knowledge of medicines, although more Japanese people knew that “Sold at pharmacies, drug stores, and on the Internet, etc.” than Taiwanese people, overall, Taiwanese people have a better understanding of TCMs than Japanese people towards KMs (Fig. 1). However, there is still room for improvement in Japan and Taiwan. As for the acquisition routes of medicines, due to differences in the medical license system, KMs are mainly obtained by Western medicine doctors’ prescription in Japan, while TCMs are mainly obtained by Chinese medicine doctors’ prescription in Taiwan. In addition, Japanese people also mainly purchase KMs at pharmacies, drugstores, and online, but Taiwanese people mainly purchase TCMs at a traditional Chinese medicine pharmacy. In terms of impressions, and expectations, both are roughly the same. The difference is that Japanese people generally believe that KMs are too expensive, so they hope to reduce the price. In terms of the OTC medicines, the results from Japan and Taiwan are completely different, especially the difference of the usage ratio of “kakkonto” is more than half. However, the reason for choosing to use OTC medicines is same in Japan and Taiwan, that is, they can be easily used.

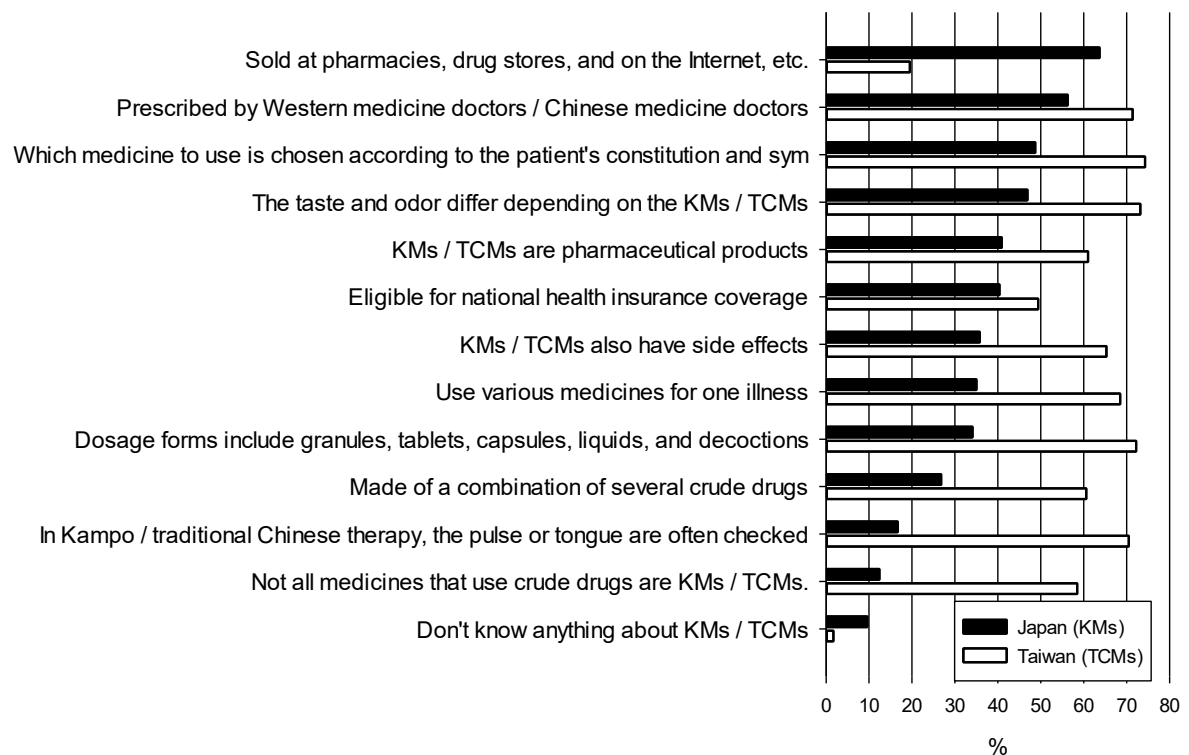


Figure 1. Comparison about the knowledge of medicines

## V. Conclusion

KMs are traditional herbal medicine practiced in Japan according to the local culture and climate based on TCMs. As a result, in fact, TCMs and KMs are roughly the same in essence. However, due to differences in doctor licensing systems and people's habits between Japan and Taiwan, in fact people's attitude and experience in using KMs or TCMs are different. Overall, although Taiwanese people have more usage and correct understanding of TCMs than that of KMs towards Japanese people, but in fact there are still misunderstandings about TCMs or KMs. Therefore, whether in Japan or Taiwan, medical-related personnel should continue to deliver correct information to enhance or improve Japanese or Taiwanese people's understanding or usage habits of medicines.