LETTER TO THE EDITOR

EFFECT OF YOKUKANSAN, JAPANESE HERBAL MEDICINE, ON PHANTOM-LIMB PAIN

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To the Editor:

Phantom-limb pain is highly prevalent after limb amputation but remains an extremely challenging pain condition to treat\(^1\),\(^2\). The treatment must be multimodal and mechanism-based because the underlying pathological changes occur in both the peripheral and the central nervous system after amputation\(^1\),\(^2\). We report a patient who had suffered from intractable phantom-limb pain for years, successfully treated with Japanese herbal medicine yokukansan.

A 30-year-old woman, who had undergone amputation of the left lower extremity under the knee consequence of trauma three years ago, was referred to our institution for the treatment of intractable chronic phantom-limb pain. Although the patient had been treated by medications with pregabalin (300 mg/day), and mixture of acetaminophen (1500 mg/day) and tramadol (150 mg/day), the numerical rating scale (NRS) at the first visit was 7/10. The NRS showed that the pain was not alleviated enough. Antidepressants and epidural block according to the recommendation on phantom-limb pain\(^1\),\(^2\) were ineffective in this case.

Keywords: Phantom-limb pain, Yokukansan, Japanese herbal medicine, Kampo.

The symptom in Kampo theory including anger, anxiety, and increased tonus of rectus abdominis indicated yokukansan should be suitable for the patient. Therefore, we intended to treat the patient with yokukansan (7.5 g/day) as a complemental treatment in combination with pregabalin, acetaminophen, and tramadol. Yokukansan successfully treated the phantom-limb pain and ameliorated NRS to 2/10 after 28 days. Recent researches suggest that yokukansan can inhibit opioid tolerance\(^3\), and attenuate neuropathic pain\(^4\),\(^5\).

Kampo, a traditional Japanese herbal medicine, is an alternative medical approach to intractable chronic pain. Yokukansan may be effective on patients suffering from phantom-limb pain without serious adverse reaction.

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Conflicts of interest: None.
References

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**REFERENCES**
1. BRIDION Summary of Product Characteristics (SFC).

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