が伴います。漢方薬はそれらのがん患者のQOLを低下させる諸症状を和らげることがこれまでの臨床医の経験を通して知られており、そして現在、その経験が科学的アプローチにより裏打ちされつつあります。

たとえば、外科手術による術後の腸管の癒着、腸管運動不全、イレウスなどに対しての症状緩和に大建中湯が奏効することがわかってきており、外科手術の現場では今や普通に用いられています。大建中湯は腸管の上皮細胞にあるtransient receptor potential (TRP)チャネル、特にTRPV1ならびにTRPA1というチャネルを活性化することにより細胞からアドレノメデュリンというペプチドを放出させ、その結果腸管の血流が増加し、腸管運動が活発化することで腸管癒着を防止することがわかってきました3)-5)。

また, 放射線療法やがん化学療法で起こる 口内炎についても漢方薬が奏効することがわ かってきました7)8)。2012年の米国消化器病週間 (Digestive Disease Week: DDW)においては、 実に26題もの漢方薬に関する発表が行われまし た。この学会は米国の学術集会ですが、消化器病 関連では世界で一番権威のある学会とされていま す。演題採択もかなり難しく、採択されるだけで も素晴らしいと評価される学会です。その内容に ついては、「Nikkei Medical」別冊漢方特集に詳 しく紹介されています9)。がんに関連した漢方薬 の効果についても、食思改善に奏効する六君子 湯、口内炎改善に奏効する半夏瀉心湯の演題につ いての紹介がありますが、化学療法、放射線療法 において高い頻度で起こる口内炎に半夏瀉心湯が 奏効すること, そしてそのメカニズムを詳しく紹 介した河野透先生の発表は多くの諸外国の医師の 興味を引いていました9)。半夏瀉心湯による口内 炎の症状緩和には、構成する7種の生薬成分のそ れぞれが鎮痛ならびに組織修復作用を有すること が基礎研究により明らかになりつつあります。私 たちの研究室でもこの生薬ごとの作用メカニズム 解明について鋭意研究を進めているところです。

口内炎に加え、放射線療法、化学療法を受けているがん患者は、食思不振、嘔気・嘔吐、髪が抜ける、下痢、手足のしびれなどさまざまな副作用が起きます。さらに、終末期がん患者は悪液質と呼ばれる症状を呈し、食思不振、全身倦怠感、嘔気・嘔吐、便秘、気持ちの低下が起こります。そのような患者に、たとえば食思不振、嘔気・嘔吐に六君子湯、便秘、イレウスに大建中湯、全身倦怠感に補中益気湯、十全大補湯などがエビデンスをもって奏効することがわかってきました10)。

シスプラチンなどの化学療法を受けておられる 患者は、食事ができない、できても吐いてしまう といった副作用に悩まされ、このことは患者の QOLを大きく低下させます。消化器症状の改善 には六君子湯が江戸時代より用いられてきていま すが、北海道大学臨床病態解析学研究室の武田宏 司先生は、シスプラチンを投与して食思不振を起 こさせたラットを用いて、六君子湯が明らかに食 -思を改善すること, そのメカニズムに食思増進ペ プチドとして知られている内在性ホルモン,グレ リンの増加が起こること、その作用はセロトニン 2c受容体を抑制すること, さらに六君子湯の8種 の生薬の1つ、陳皮(温州ミカンの皮を乾燥させ たもの)に含まれるフラボノイド類にその効果が あることを証明しました11)。一方, 鹿児島大学 心身内科学の乾明夫先生のグループは、六君子湯 はグレリンを分泌させるだけでなくグレリン受容 体の活性を増強することを見出しました。さらに その作用が8生薬中の蒼朮(そうじゅつ)に含まれ るアトラクチロジンによって起こっていることを 証明しました。六君子湯に含まれる異なる生薬が グレリンの分泌ならびにグレリン受容体の機能を 高めることで、結果的にグレリンシグナルを強 めていることがわかったのです12)。このような ターゲットに有効な成分を明らかにしようとする 研究は、ほかに抑肝散、牛車腎気丸などでも行わ れており、最も進んでいるのが人参、山椒、乾姜

という3種の生薬でできている大建中湯です。大 建中湯の乾姜に含まれる6-ショーガオールが腸管 腔より上皮細胞に働きTRPA1活性化→アドレノ メデュリン放出→血流増加となること、山椒に含 まれるハイドロキシ-α-サンショールが血中に吸 収された後、上皮細胞に働き活動性の閾値を下げ ることによりTRPV1、TRPA1に6-ショーガオー ルが反応しやすい環境をつくり出し、また人参に 含まれるシンセノサイドなどの成分が6-ショーガ オールやハイドロキシ-α-サンショールをター ゲット細胞にアクセスしやすくしているのではと いう仮説が基礎研究により次々と証明されつつあ ります。結果としての血流の増加、腸管運動亢進 作用が大建中湯の効能であり"腹が冷えて痛み、 腹部膨満感がある"状況を改善すると考えられま す。実際, 大建中湯を飲むとお腹が温まると話す 患者は多いことからも納得できます。研究が進展 すれば、なぜこの組み合わせで漢方薬が構成され ているのか、なぜこの組み合わせでないといけな いのかという、漢方薬の「組み合わせの妙」が解 き明かされる日も近いかもしれません。前述した 乾先生のグループは、六君子湯はがん細胞を接種 したラットの生存を延ばすことを明らかにしま した¹²⁾。同じことがヒトでもいえるのかについ て, われわれは北海道大学を中心とした北海道の 14病院で、手術のできない膵がんⅣ期患者を対象 に「ゲムシタビン投与膵がん患者における軽度悪 液質または前悪液質状態に対する六君子湯の悪液 質進行抑制効果─無作為化第Ⅱ相比較試験」を計 画し、2012年4月14日にキックオフミーティング を行い、現在臨床試験のための患者登録を行って います。その方法とは、患者を2群に分け、六君 子湯の薬効を確かめる比較試験です。この結果を もとに2013年にはどちらかに漢方薬、もう一方に プラセボと呼ばれる形・におい・味・食感は同じ で有効成分のないものを飲んでもらうランダム化 比較試験を行っていく予定です。現在では、漢方 薬メーカーの努力によりそのようなプラセボ薬が

作られています。

漢方薬市民公開セミナー

2011年11月26日と2012年6月24日に、厚生労働科学研究費補助金第3次対がん総合戦略研究事業研究班とNPO法人キャンサーネットジャパンとの共催で、市民公開セミナー『もっと知ってほしい「がんと漢方薬」のこと一漢方薬の現状とこれから』を開催いたしました(図2,3)13)。

同班は、「がん治療の副作用軽減ならびにがん 患者のQOL向上のための漢方薬の臨床応用とそ の作用機構の解明」という研究を2010~2013年 の4年をかけて行っています。一方キャンサー ネットジャパンは、がん患者を支援している組 織・団体の垣根を越えて、抗がん剤の作用など について科学的エビデンスに基づいたがん情報 を発信しているNPO法人です13)。特に2012年、 Health On the Net Foundation (HON)の適性認 証(HON code)を得ており、国内におけるがんに 関する科学的エビデンスを公平に全国の皆さんに 紹介している優れた組織です。同セミナーは、1 回目160名、2回目170名の市民の皆様の参加を 得て開催されました。内容については動画サイ ト『YouTube』に公開されており、誰でもその 内容を視聴することが可能です。YouTubeで, 「上園保仁」と検索するとその内容にアクセス することができます(http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=WlTn2QVfAAI).

市民公開セミナーでのQ&A およびアンケート調査から

このように2回、「がんと漢方薬のこと一漢方薬の現状とこれから」について公開セミナーを行いましたが、Q&Aならびにアンケート調査から浮き彫りになったことがありました。それは、がん患者とその家族の方が漢方薬に興味をもっており、症状によっては処方してもらいたいと思って



図2. 第2回市民公開セミナーポスター

いても、誰に相談していいのかわからない、主治 医に尋ねても取り合ってくれない、そもそも科学 的根拠があるということを知らなかった、など、 漢方薬を自ら使うという段階に行き着くには大き なギャップがあることがわかったのです。

そこでわれわれはこのような現況に鑑み、全国でがん治療、緩和ケアに取り組んでいらっしゃる医師の先生方に、漢方薬の作用メカニズムについての科学的エビデンス蓄積の現状ならびに漢方薬を用いた臨床研究における最新情報について報告できればと考え、全国医師向け「漢方キャラバンセミナー」を計画いたしました。2012年7月7日~9月23日の全7回、北は北海道から南は九州福岡まで全国5ヵ所で開催いたしました。今回のキャラバンでは、河野透先生より漢方薬の基礎、臨床研究のエビデンスを、北里大学薬学部の今津嘉宏先生よりがんの諸症状に



図3. 第2回市民公開セミナープログラム

応じた漢方薬の使い方を紹介いただきました(図4,5)。またその後Q&Aの時間を設けました。参加された医師の皆様からは「参加してよかった」「ためになった」「早速漢方薬の処方を考えます」という前向きな意見をいただいています。

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おわりに

がん患者は、がん自体により、また抗がん剤治療や放射線療法により全身倦怠感、食思不振、痛みや吐き気などQOLを低下させるさまざまな症状に悩まされています。われわれ基礎医学研究者はがん患者のQOLを向上させる薬物療法などについて、その根拠となるデータを科学的に証明し、治療についてのエビデンスのある基盤データを臨床サイドに提供しなければならないと思っています。漢方薬がなぜがん患者の症状を和らげる

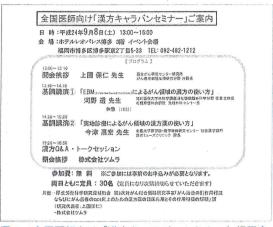


図4. 全国医師向け「漢方キャラバンセミナー」福岡会場プログラム

のか? これまでの多くの経験、そしてさまざまとがわかりはじめています。しかし、しっかりとした客観的で質の高い臨床試験を計画し、また漢方薬のプラセボ薬を用いた二重盲検でランダム化臨床比較試験を行い、事実を明らかにしていくことが必要であると考えています。くわえて、漢方薬がどのようなメカニズムで効くのかについて、生薬のどの成分が作用し、組み合わせではどのようなことが起こるのかなどについても科学的エビデンスに基づいたデータを集積したいと考えています。少しでも早く、漢方薬をはじめとして基礎医学の研究結果ががん患者のQOL向上に役立てばと願い、研究を進めているところです。

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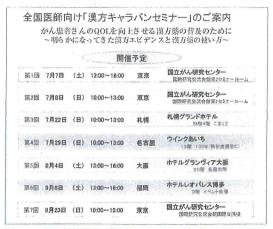


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A Review of Traditional Japanese Medicines and their Potential Mechanism of Action

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Abstract: Traditional Japanese herbal, or Kampo medicine was developed and modified from Chinese herbal medicine. After the Japanese government approved Kampo for clinical use, much attention has been paid to establishing scientific evidence for the effectiveness of these medicines. Recent progress has been made in elucidating the mechanisms of action of some types of Kampo medicine, including rikkunshito (RKT), daikenchuto, and yokukansan. In this review, we focused on identifying the target molecules and the active ingredients of RKT.

Thus far, many target molecules have been implicated in the mechanism of action of Kampo medicines, such as ion channels, enzymes, and receptors. In particular, G protein-coupled receptors are attractive candidates for explaining herbal medicine activity. This is particularly true of RKT, which is composed of 8 independent, crude drug extracts. Recent reports have shown that RKT elicits its effects through dual action to the G protein-coupled receptors: inhibition of serotonergic 5-HT_{2C} and 5-HT_{2B} receptors and activation of ghrelin receptors via specific ingredients of RKT.

In addition, we suggest that the identification of the effective ingredients from Kampo medicines could contribute to the discovery and development of new drugs by means of modern high-throughput drug screening technology.

Keywords: Rikkunshito, GPCR, Kampo medicine, herbal medicine, ghrelin.

1. KAMPO MEDICINES

Chinese herbal medicine, one of the oldest forms of traditional medicine, has been used in China and other countries for more than 3000 years. Traditional Japanese herbal, or Kampo medicine originated from its Chinese counterpart after the latter was introduced into Japan and subsequently modified and developed to suit Japanese culture and environmental factors [1]. These Kampo medicines, systemically developed in the 16th century into a more specifically Japanese form, have a wide range of indications for maintaining quality of life, rather than curing patients [2]. Kampo medicine is thus intended to boost the body's own healing power (i.e., immune system) and help restore its natural balance.

Since Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare approved a series of approximately 130 Kampo medicines for use in clinical practice, they have been increasingly employed to help maintain the quality of life in patients with diseases such as gastrointestinal disorders, cancer, and lifestyle-related diseases [3]. However, there is little scientific evidence supporting the reliable clinical use of these treatments. This is because Kampo medicines are composed of several crude drug products, mainly extracted from plants, and it is difficult to maintain consistent quality and quantity of these ingredients. Consequently, evidence-based medicine has avoided the field of Kampo medicine. Recently, however, Kampo medicines have been developed in Japan through clinical and laboratory studies based on Western-adopted, scientific, experiment-based approaches [1, 4]. Thus, in the past decade, to support the use of Kampo medicine, scientific evidence has been accumulated and is continuously increasing.

In this review, we focused on the top 10 best-selling Kampo medicines in Japan and reviewed their mechanisms of action with laboratory-based, scientific approaches. In particular, we focused on G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs). These molecules

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comprise the largest superfamily of cell-surface receptors, mediate many important physiological functions, and are considered some of the most successful therapeutic targets for a broad spectrum of diseases, serving as the target for more than 30 % of the current therapeutic agents on the market [5, 6]. Even though Kampo medicines are composed of many active substances, GPCR assay development and GPCR ligand screening of the substances in Kampo medicines appear quite successful in identifying new bioactive substances, as compared to ready-made, low molecule panels. We therefore examined the cellular signaling pathways of Kampo medicines primarily through GPCRs. In this review, we chose to focus on a widely used Kampo medicine in Japan, namely, "rikkunshito (RKT)," for the analysis of RKT-mediated GPCR signaling.

2. PUBLISHED STUDIES REGARDING THE MOST COM-MONLY USED KAMPO MEDICINES

The most frequently, clinically used Kampo medicines in Japan, as reflected by the top 10 best-selling products, are made by Tsumura Co. Ltd., and are listed in (Table 1) [7]. The table also lists the number of relevant scientific reports found via the PubMed database. We found a direct relationship between sales rank and number of peer-reviewed research papers published on the product (Table 1). As a result, we have chosen the top 10, bestselling Kampo medicines in Japan (and an additional 2 products with a significant number of scientific reports) for our study. We introduced and summarized the scientific reports for these products by elucidating each medicine's signaling mechanism and site of action. (Table 2) lists the pathological symptoms currently treated by the Kampo medicines listed in (Table 1).

3. PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECTS AND THE MECHANISMS OF ACTIONS OF THE KAMPO MEDICINES

(Table 3) shows the pharmacology and mechanisms of actions of the 12 Kampo medicines listed in (Table 1), without listing GPCR-mediated signaling (these pathways are explained later, in an independent section). For each listed Kampo medicine, a variety of cellular signaling processes related to the drug's pharmacological action are reported in the literature, e.g., activation of the transient

Table 1. The Ranking of Sales and Numbers of Scientific Reports of Kampo Medicines

Kampo	Sales in 2010		Numbers of Paper	
	The Ranking [7]	(Million of Yen) [7]	The Ranking	(Searched by PubMed)
Daikenchuto	. 1	7,960	4	. 59
Hochuekkito	2	6,218	12	19
Rikkunshito	3	5,288	7	46
Yokukansan	4	3,984	2	64
Kamishoyosan	5	3,653	10	27
Goshajinkigan	6	3,531	8	41
Bakumondouto	7	3,510	11	24
Saireito	8	3,336	1	108
Shakuyakukanzoto	9	3,309	6	51
Shouseiryuto	10	2,757	9	40
Saibokuto	Out of Top 10		3	60
Keishibukuryogan		·	5	55

Table 2. Medical Claims of Kampo

Sales Ranking (see Table 1)		Medical Claims		
1	Daikenchuto	Sense of abdominal distension and pain by feeling cold in abdomen		
2	Hochuekkito	Loss of appetite, languor and enhancement of physical strength of the convalescence		
3	Rikkunshito	Loss of appetite, gastritis, stomach pain and dyspepsia		
4	Yokukansan	Neurosis, insomnia, irritability in children		
5	Kamishoyosan	Climacteric disturbance, coldness of hands and legs, nervousness and menoxenia		
6	Goshajinkigan	Lumbago, pain of lower extremities and numbness		
7	Bakumondouto	Bronchitis, bronchial asthma and cough accompanying severe sputum		
8	Saireito	Diarrhea, edema and acute gastroenteritis		
9	Shakuyakukanzoto	Muscle cramp, pain with muscle cramp		
10	Shouseiryuto	Allergic rhinitis, rhinitis, bronchial asthma and bronchitis		
Out of Top 10	Saibokuto	Anxiety neurosis, bronchial asthma, bronchitis and cough		
Keishibukuryogan		Climacteric disturbance, hot flash, menoxenia and endometritis		

receptor potential channel vanilloid 1 (TRPV1) in daikenchuto (DKT) [8], enhancement of cytokine production in hochuekkito and induction of nitric oxide (NO) synthesis in RKT [9, 10], inhibition of N-methyl-D-asparatic acid (NMDA) receptor [11], or activation of y-aminobutyric acid A (GABA_A) receptor [12] in yokukansan (YKS). These findings suggest that there are numerous potential target molecules in the cells for the pharmacological action of Kampo medicines. This is probably because Kampo medicines are composed of mixtures of more than 2 crude drug extracts, and thus contain multiple substances that could activate many signaling pathways in the cells.

4. GPCRS

GPCRs comprise the largest superfamily of cell-surface receptors, accounting for 4 % of the human genome [13]. Although the GPCR family members share a structural similarity—namely, a characteristic, 7-transmembrane-spanning architecture linked by an N-terminal extracellular domain, C-terminal intracellular domain, 3 extracellular loops, and 3 intracellular loops—different GPCRs react with different types of ligands, including photons, ions, biogenic amines, peptide and non-peptide neurotransmitters, hormones, growth factors, and lipids. Each ligand transduces its specific signal to the intracellular effectors via a conformational

Table 3. Pharmacological Actions and it's Mechanism of Kampo: Expect for GPCRs

Sales Ranking (see Table 1)		Pharmacological Actions	Mechanism of Actions	References
1	Daikenchuto	Enhancement of gastrointestial motility	Activation of TRPV1	[8]
2	Hochuekkito	Improvement of immunosuppression	Enhancement of cytokine production (IFNα, IFNγ, IL-12)	[97, 98]
,		Gastric emptying effects	Induction of NO synthesis	[10]
		Protective effects of gastric mucosal injury	Induction of NO synthesis	[9]
3 Rikkunshito	Rikkunshito		Inhibition of myeloperoxidase (MPO) activity	[99]
			Increase of heat-shock protein 60 (HSP60) expression	
		Suppression of secretion of gastric acid	Inhibition of activity of H ⁺ , K ⁺ -ATPase	[101]
	,	Suppression of calming effects	Attenuation of abnormal glutamate release	[102]
			Amelioration of the levels of both glutamate uptake and expression of glutamate aspartate transporter	[103]
	4 Yokukansan		Inhibition of NMDA receptor	[11]
	<i>:</i>	Improvement of insomnia	Activation of GABAA receptor	[12]
5	Kamishoyosan	Anxiolytic effects in climacteric women	Activation of GABA _A receptor	[104]
		Antinociceptive effects (numbness)		[53]
6 Goshajinkigan	Goshajinkigan	Increase of blood flow	Induction of NO synthesis	[105]
7	Bakumondouto	Antiallergic effects	Suppression of degranulation	[55]
		Hydragogue effects	Antagonistic action on the mineral corticoid receptor	[106]
. 8	8 Saireito	Antiinflammation effects	Inhibition of prostaglandin E_2 production and cyclooxygenase-2 expression	[107, 108]
			Production of proopiomelanocortin (POMC)	[109]
9	Shakuyakukanzoto	Antispasmodic effects	Increase of cAMP by inhibition of phosphodiesterase III	[110]

(Table 3) Contd....

Sales Ranking (see Table 1)		Pharmacological Actions	Mechanism of Actions	References
10	Shouseiryuto	Antiallergic and antiinflammatory effects on respiratory	Suppression of cytokine production (IL-3, IL-4)	[111, 112]
			Generation of NO in airway epithelium	[113]
Out of Top 10	Saibokuto	Antiallergic and antiinflammatory effects on respiratory	Suppression of cytokine production (IL-3, IL-4)	[114]
			Generation of NO in airway epithelium	[115]
	Keishibukuryogan	Regulation of female hormone	Regulation of luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle- stimulating hormone (FSH)	[116]
		Effects on adenomyosis	Suppression of activity of thymidylate synthetase in uteri	[117]

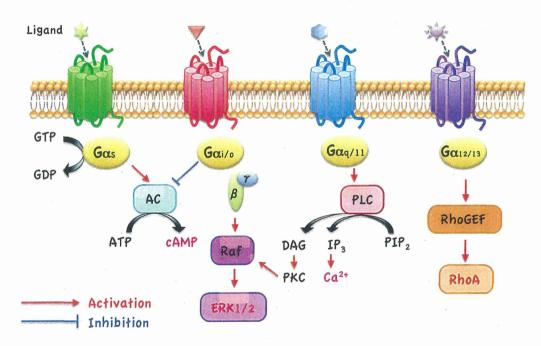


Fig. (1). G protein-coupled receptor (GPCR)-mediated signaling. Schematic representation of major pathways of GPCR signaling by different G_{α} proteins. Red line: activation, blue line: inhibition. AC: adenylyl cyclase, ERK1/2: extracellular signal-regulated kinase 1/2, PLC: phospholipase C, RhoGEF: Rho guanine nucleotide exchange factor.

rearrangement linked to an increasing number of cytosolic interactants [14]. When an agonist binds to its specific receptors, these receptors catalyze the exchange of guanidine diphosphate (GDP) for guanidine triphosphate (GTP) on the α -subunit of heterotrimeric G proteins that are composed of 3 independent proteins (namely α -, β -, and γ -subunits), change their conformation, and cause dissociation of G α from the dimeric G $\beta\gamma$ subunits [15]. As shown in (Fig. 1), GPCRs coupled to G α s activate adenylyl cyclase, whereas those coupled to G α i/o inhibit this enzyme. Cyclic adenosine 3', 5'-monophosphate (cAMP), produced by adenylyl cyclase from adenosine 5'-triphosphate (ATP), serves as a second messenger that

activates protein kinase A (PKA) and other downstream effectors. In addition, GB γ subunits released from G $\alpha_{1/0}$ -coupled, receptorbound, trimeric G proteins activate Raf and extracellular signal-regulated kinase (ERK) 1/2 pathways. GPCRs coupled to G $\alpha_{q/11}$ activate phospholipase C (PLC), which catalyzes the formation of diacylglycerol (DAG) and inositol-1,4,5-trisphosphate (IP $_3$) from phosphatidylinositol 4,5-biphosphate (PIP $_2$). The IP $_3$ thus produced, binds to and opens the endoplasmic IP $_3$ -gated calcium channel, releasing calcium into the cytoplasm, eventually increasing intracellular Ca $^{2+}$ concentrations. The DAG thus produced activates protein kinase C (PKC), which also activates Raf-mediated path-

ways. GPCRs coupling to $G\alpha_{12/13}$ activate the Rho guanine nucleotide exchange factor (RhoGEF), which in turn activates the small G protein RhoA. Signals elicited by G proteins stimulate downstream signaling, such as enhancement of transcription and translation, which induce a specific GPCR-mediated cellular response [16, 17].

5. ASSAY OF GPCR-MEDIATED SIGNALING

GPCRs mediate many important physiological functions and are considered some of the most effective therapeutic targets for a broad spectrum of diseases. Hence, the establishment and development of a GPCR assay for GPCR ligand screening is very important. Receptor binding assays are used for the characterization of the interaction between receptors and their ligands, such as the intrinsic affinity of ligands for the receptor, association/dissociation rates, and the density of receptors in tissues or cells [18]. Receptor binding assays have been used to obtain information about agonists and antagonists in previous experiments [18]. The availability of labeled ligands, however, greatly limits the usefulness of this assay. Additionally, upon ligand binding, GPCRs change their conformation and activate coupled G proteins, which subsequently promote second-messenger production via downstream effectors, and such cellular changes are not detected with this assay. As a result, corresponding assays measuring either G protein activation or G proteinmediated events are necessary in addition to the binding assay (Fig. 1).

GTPγS-binding assays directly measure the guanine nucleotide exchange of G proteins, an early and simple event following GPCR activation, since it is not subjected to amplification or regulation by other cellular effector systems [19]. Typically, the accumulation of a nonhydrolysable GTP analog, such as [35S]-GTPγS, on a plasma membrane prepared from cells expressing GPCRs of interest is measured after agonist stimulation. The merit of the GTPγS-binding assay over the ligand binding assay is that it can discriminate between full or partial agonists, neutral antagonists, inverse agonists, and allosteric regulators [20].

Assays measuring cellular levels of cAMP are dependent on the activity of adenylyl cyclase, which is regulated by GPCRs coupled to $G\alpha_s$ or $G\alpha_{i/o}$ proteins. As shown in (Fig. 1), $G\alpha_s$ stimulates the activity of adenylyl cyclase to increase cellular cAMP levels. In contrast, $G\alpha_{i/o}$ negatively regulates adenylyl cyclase to decrease cAMP levels. The ERK1/2 assay, which measures levels of phosphorylated ERK1/2, could also be used to measure $G\alpha_{i/o}$ -mediated signaling.

Stimulation of $G\alpha_{q/11}$ -coupled-GPCRs activates PLC, which in turn produces IP_3 and DAG. While DAG activates PKC, IP_3 results in an efflux of Ca^{2+} from the endoplasmic reticulum into the cytoplasm, eventually elevating the intracellular Ca^{2+} concentration ($[Ca^{2+}]_i$). Thus, measuring $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ is a reliable and easy assay for these receptors. Measurement of $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ is very popular in GPCR screening, employing commercially available, cell-permeable, highly Ca^{2+} -sensitive fluorescent dyes such as Fluo-3 and Fluo-4. Thus Ca^{2+} -assays are robust and easily amenable to high throughput assay. One drawback of such an assay is that calcium flux occurs rapidly and transiently and is thus unsuitable for detecting long-lasting cellular events. Assays of $G\alpha_{12/13}$ protein-mediated signaling face the drawback that it remains relatively difficult to measure their downstream second messengers [21].

6. GPCRS AS SITES OF ACTION OF KAMPO MEDICINES

Among the 12 Kampo medicines we studied, a significant number stimulate or inhibit some GPCR-mediated pathways, as shown in (Table 4). To study these pathways, we next introduce and describe GPCR-mediated signaling using 2 particular examples, DKT and YKS. Others are also introduced (Table 4).

1) DKT

DKT is widely prescribed for patients with gastrointestinal obstruction, such as postoperative ileus (POI) or postoperative intestinal paralysis [22-24]. Studies based on several animal disease-models have shown that DKT is therapeutically effective. POI is a transient bowel motor dysfunction that occurs after surgery; DKT has been found to ameliorate delayed gastrointestinal transit in a rat POI model, created by inducing laparotomy via intestinal manipulation [25, 26] or talc-induced intestinal adhesion [27]. These results were repeated in a hypoperistalsis model induced by chlorpromazine in mice [28]. These ameliorative effects were partially inhibited by SB204070, a serotonergic 5-HT₄ receptor antagonist, and the effects were completely abolished by atropine, a muscarinic receptor antagonist [26]. These results thus demonstrate that DKT performed its action via muscarinic and 5-HT₄ receptors.

Additional evidence further linked DKT's effects to 5-HT₄ receptors. DKT induced contractions in a dose-related manner in the isolated guinea pig ileum, and this contraction was completely suppressed by atropine and tetrodotoxin, an inhibitor of voltage-gated Na⁺ channels—and this contraction was partially suppressed in the presence of a 5-HT₄ receptor antagonist [29]. Intraduodenal and intrajejunal application of DKT induced phasic contractions in the duodenum and proximal jejunum, respectively, which were both inhibited by atropine [30]. These results suggest that the contractile response induced by DKT is partially mediated by acetylcholine released from cholinergic nerve endings and 5-HT₄ receptors.

In addition, tachykinins, such as substance P (SP)—which is also classified in the GPCR family agonist-may also be involved in the atropine-resistant contraction induced by DKT [8]. A single oral administration of DKT caused significant increases in plasma levels of neurotransmitters, such as motilin [31], vasoactive intestinal peptide (VIP), 5-HT [32], calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP), and SP [33]—but not of gastrin or somatostatin [31]. It has been shown that DKT induces the release of motilin and VIP into plasma mainly through the activation of muscarinic M1 receptors [34]. Although intestinal motility of DKT has been suggested as an important mechanism underlying its effective motility, increased intestinal or colonic blood flow caused by DKT is another potentially important mechanism. Administration of DKT to rats increased blood flow in both the small and large intestine via the CGRP/ adrenomedullin (ADM) receptor family [24, 35-37]. The CGRP receptor is composed of the calcitonin receptor-like receptor (CRLR) and single transmembrane domain receptor activity modifying protein 1 (RAMP1), and ADM receptors are composed of CRLR with RAMP2 [38, 39]. Interestingly, mRNA expression for CRLR and RAMP1 were upregulated by DKT in the rat colon [36], demonstrating that increased blood flow by DKT is mainly mediated by CGRP and its receptors. Collectively, DKT's effects are mediated, at least in part, by some GPCRs, such as 5-HT receptors, muscarinic receptors, and CGRP/ADM receptors.

2) YKS

YKS has been reported to improve behavioral and psychological symptoms associated with dementia (BPSD), such as hallucinations, agitation, and aggressiveness in patients with Alzheimer's disease, dementia with Lewy bodies, and other forms of senile dementia [2, 40, 41]. Research supporting these significant clinical effects of YKS has been performed in a series of disease-related animal models. In these studies, YKS ameliorated BPSD-like symptoms, such as aggressive behavior, anxiety-like behavior, and decreases in social behaviors in thiamine-deficient rats [42, 43], zinc-deficient mice [44], amyloid β protein (A β)-intracerebroventricular (i.c.v.)-injected mice [45, 46], A β precursor proteintransgenic mice [47], and para-chloroamphetamine (PCA)-injected rats [48]. The mechanisms behind these ameliorative effects have been shown to involve serotonergic function via 5-HT receptors.