

## FOREWORD

In Korea, folk medicine has been used for thousands of years. As to traditional medicine, Korea is a unique country since the Korean government approved colleges and hospitals of traditional medicine, which have been educating and producing oriental medical doctors for more than 40 years under their own academic curricula and training programs. It means that the Korean government thinks that the traditional medicine can contribute to the health care for Korean people although many of its theories and methodologies need to be studied and proved.

Although the traditional medicine in Korea is actively taking part in the health care and has shown to be working for some diseases, mostly chronic, what we have to realize about the traditional medicine is that this traditional medicine has a value as sources for medicinal information rather than as a therapeutic profession for patient care. Among the information held in the traditional medicine, those on herb actions known through the experiences are particularly important as we may be able to get useful active components that are therapeutic, health promoting or disease-preventing. In this sense, the herb pharmacology is the field exposing the traditional medicine to modern scientific approaches.

In traditional medicine, thousands of plants have been used and many of them have been studied by scientific methods. Among those, ginseng is a most favorably used herb among Koreans for thousands of years due to its famous tonic and anti-aging action. Koreans have long used the term INSAM, the Japanese pronunciation of which is ginseng. It is also the most extensively studied herb in Korea since its actions are so concretely believed. The INSAM researches done so

far have found many pharmacological actions of this plant. Of those, cancer chemopreventive actions drew a special attention because we know that cancer is a disease with limitation in complete cure and thus, its prevention is the best way to save human from this ailment.

So far many scientists have been involved in INSAM researches for its cancer chemopreventive action, and many positive results have been obtained and reported. However, it is a time that we have to critically evaluate this action in terms of how convincing it is, what the mechanism of its action is and how wide its prevention coverage is. In this regard, it is fortunate that the Korean Academy of Medical Sciences (KAMS) held the symposium on INSAM on April 20, 2001, where we were able to obtain some answers to these questions. Therefore, the KAMS decided to publish the symposium presentations as a supplement of *Journal of Korean Medical Science*. I hope that this supplement will disseminate the INSAM information on cancer chemoprevention effect of INSAM to as many INSAM scientists as possible and serve as a guide for researches on INSAM.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Taik-Koo Yun, the chairman of the organizing committee and all its members for their contribution to the success of this symposium.

Thank you

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