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## The Diversity of Quality of Life Found at an Academic Conference Cruise in 2018

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### **ANNOUNCEMENT**

- The 2019 International Conference on Quality of Life will be held at Kyoto Pharmaceutical University from Sept 28-29, 2019. Further information can be found at <http://as4qol.org/icqol/2019/>
  - We have moved to continuous publication. Beginning January 2019 the editing committee has decided to adopt a continuous publishing model for Journal publication. Individual articles will be released online as they become ready, allowing a steady stream of informative quality articles. We will also be moving to a calendar year issue cycle. In traditional terms, each volume will encompass a single year and consist of a single issue. Publishing on a just-in-time basis allows authors to present their results in a timely fashion, and our readers, students, and colleagues to access our content and cite articles more quickly and free from the restrictions of a predefined timetable. As a result of these changes, the look and style, as well as the function, of the Journal will be different, and hopefully improved.
  - The 2018 International Meeting on Quality of Life was held recently. Proceedings as well as photos and other information can be found at <http://as4qol.org/icqol/2018/>
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## 1. Introduction: 2018 International Conference and Cruise on Quality of Life

I recently took part in the International Conference and Cruise on Quality of Life 2018 Cruise (ICQoL-2018) (departing from and returning to Singapore). Cruise-Conferences of this sort provide a suitable venue and an entirely unique atmosphere for the exchange of information and findings among researchers. As described by Foong, while on board, participants enjoyed a variety of entertainment and interactions with other participants, while being able to maintain good health and privacy while feeling at home.<sup>1</sup> In the conference, as a member of the Academic Society for Quality of Life, I gave a presentation entitled: "Kampo (traditional medicine) helps us to control our mind and body through the endocrine, nervous and immune system."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Challenges faced by people in modern society: Longevity and traditional medicine

My presentation poses the following question: Why do present-day researchers who explore the ancient field of Kampo propose it as a method suitable for use by modern people? The reason is that it is judged that Kampo medicine is an effective means of managing mental and physical health, and of thinking about the way to live correctly within our environment while nature and society are rapidly changing, so that we can live a long and healthy life. When I reflect on myself as a health provider who diagnoses patients based on Kampo medicine, I am often led to ask myself: "What is a human being?" From recent research into treatment using Kampo medicine, we can sometimes receive hints to the answer to this question. For example, applying the traditional treatment theory in medicine can also occasionally give us a hint to the cosmic meaning of man's existence. The view of human life conceived by Kampo medicine, which seems to be sublime, has come to explain modern science as a result of our research on traditional/Kampo medicine.

According to the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare the average life expectancies of Japanese men and women were 81.09 and 87.26 years of age in 2017. They predict that Japanese children born in 2007 have a 50% chance of living up to 107 years of age.<sup>4</sup> However, the data from 2010 showed a difference of about 10 years between the average life expectancy, and the age we Japanese can live independently, (Fig. 1). Each individual's challenge may be to find out "how long can I live without the assistance of others and while maintaining proper mental health?"

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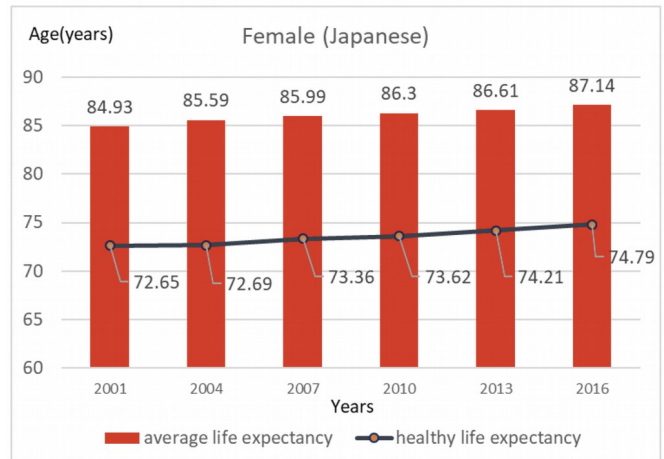
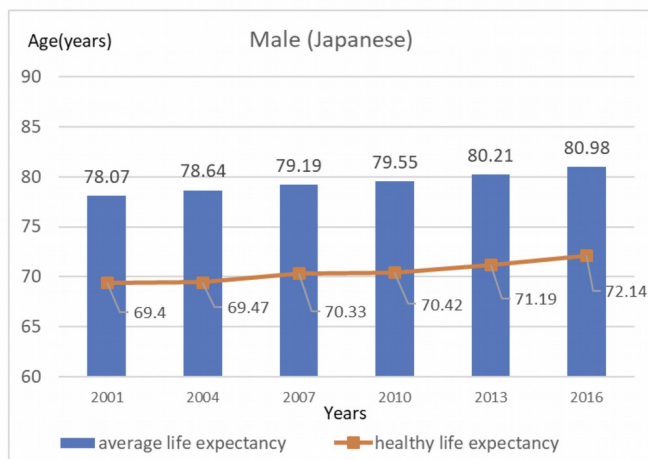


Fig. 1 Trends in average life expectancy and healthy life expectancy of Japanese men and women. Healthy life expectancy is the life span that can be sustained in one's healthy mind and body and independent life without relying on routine and continuous medical care and nursing care. source: Japanese Cabinet Office<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The mind and body: Health and Ki (Chinese: Qi) of Kampo Medicine

It is important that not only the body but also one's mental health be maintained in order to prolong a healthy life. The correlation between mental function and bodily function is an important subject, and for this mental-physical correlation to persist in a lifespan of a hundred years or more needs to be deeply researched. Because western medicine deals with the mind and body function separately, it is thought that it is difficult to construct within it a research methodology for this kind of psychosomatic correlation; however, Kampo Medicine develops its treatment based on the coexistence of the mind and body together. To understand the implications of this, the author has made a study of the relation between the minds' workings and the body's functions from the oriental medical point of view.<sup>5</sup>

At the root of the relationship between mind and body is the concept of *Ki* used in the diagnosis of Kampo. However, it may be thought that *Ki* is an 'energy' which moves through the nervous and autonomic nervous systems as expressed in human bodily function, not as a mere concept. In fact, *Ki* connects human to human and the spatial and natural world surrounding humans and other living things on our planet in the universe. *Ki* – although does not exist in a physical state – is felt and influences natural living systems. In this age when environmental superstructures and the social environment are changing rapidly and violently, it is necessary for us to live with a feel for nature and to change or evolve our mental and bodily functions to confront or adapt to these changes.

To live to the age of a hundred years, human beings must consistently continue to maintain, adapt, and evolve changes of mind and body throughout these 876,000 hours to adjust to the changing environment.

### 4. Nursing care is a connection between human beings: a relationship between human care and national traits

In Japanese, there are various expressions that refer to *Ki*, such as "bosom friends with the same *Ki* (feeling); Companionship of the Mind". The Japanese have lived by taking care of mind and body by incorporating *Ki* from nature in their daily lives.

It is presumed that the quality-of-life (QoL) is improved by understanding the invisible relationship between humans and the natural world, and this critical and delicate balance in circumventing *Ki* in our body allows us to enjoy life.

Besides the members of the Conference, on the cruise we met passengers from India, the Philippines, China, Singapore, Malaysia, and other Asian countries. Although, we were not able to count the numbers of these Asian participants on board, we were able to observe the behavior of a group of people who could be categorized as "fit" or having equilibrated or balanced *Ki*.

In particular, the social behavior of participants from the Philippines and Malaysia was interesting. On a daily basis throughout the cruise, shows including music and song were held, and family, relatives, and others danced together in a disco-like atmosphere. The Filipino people especially liked to dance in groups. When certain music was played, perhaps Zumba, everyone always formed a line and danced in tandem with almost identical gestures. They were good at enjoying the atmosphere of the place while having a lot of fun and enjoying relaxation. By contrast, many of us Japanese preferred to watch from a distance rather than joining in and participating in the



*Fig. 2 Normally wheelchair bound elderly Malaysian mother (standing, left, in group of three), who had been brought to a place with music, and invited to dance. She stood up from her wheelchair and gently moved her body with her family members.*

group-formation dancing. On another occasion in a different place where disco-like dancing was enjoyed by guests in an enclosed (but open-to-all) room, a group of Malaysians ladies came with their partially handicapped mother in a wheelchair. The physically normal ladies swayed when the music was on, and as tension increased with the increasing musical tempo, They invited their wheelchair-bound mother to dance. She stood up from the wheelchair and danced with her offspring along to the music (Fig. 2). The Japanese and other onlookers observed and were impressed that the caretaker and the caregiver were enjoying themselves. We later found out that the handicapped grandmother was participating in the cruise with her daughters, grandchildren, and relatives: all connected in one family tree. Everyone was dancing and talking happily, and the grandmother was having so much fun with the young ones; the grandmother was talkative, and was saying this and that without hesitation. Looking back on it later, she told us that the music was her favorite (reminding her of her youthful days), and the party was gay with drinks, and the company was just having so much fun that she could not remain sitting doing nothing. It was natural there and then, she stood up and danced along without feeling pain or difficulty, of which she would normally have complained.

It is difficult know whether the behavior of individual participants on a given moment on a cruise is a manifestation of the typical customs and values in their home country. However, if one is given the leisure and space to spend a 7-day cruise with them on the same boat at sea, and interact in and out as a group, one can come to feel less sensitive and conscious of the gap between of one's own existence/life and that of other people. Thinking about QoL as a member of Academic Society for Quality of Life, I came to realize that cruising may be a useful way to discover the national characters of people from other countries.

## 5. Conclusion: The quality and happiness of a life with diversities

Japan's growing aging population and a shortage of local working staff has led to necessary employment of nursing care workers from foreign countries, especially those who have grown up in Asian countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines, for elderly care.<sup>6</sup> Caregivers are required to help care for the physically handicapped or incapable elderly in all aspects of daily life in order to maintain and improve their QoL. However, both of these—the care-giver and the care-receiver—are humans with feelings. The improvement of the QoL of not only the person who receives care, but also the person who is providing care must be considered. In short, for this human-human relationship to maintain in good balance, and for the interdependent system to be workable, an effort to acknowledge and accept each other's lifestyle and values should be exercised. A balance in *Ki* between the parties should be healthily circulated.

We may find that the quality of life is a degree of happiness that each person evaluates and measured individually. Happiness in life may be gained by devising a way of life derived from learning various patterns of behavior and thinking from the people surrounding us.

Furthermore, not only in the area of elderly care, if the upheaval of the society and the natural environment continues, there will be times when multilateral assistance is needed never more than now.

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