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Integrative Medicine for COVID-19 in Japan

SARS-CoV-2, imported to Japan in January 2020, COVID-19 was initially treated primarily by infectious disease specialists, respiratory specialists, and emergency physicians. However, as the infection spread to people with underlying medical conditions, all departments began to take the lead in treating COVID-19. Each department developed a guideline for the treatment of COVID-19 in early 2020, followed by a guideline by the Japanese Federation of Medical Societies.

Currently, most patients admitted to hospitals are severely ill or potentially seriously ill (patients with underlying diseases, elderly patients). At the hospital, patients are treated by a team led by an infectious disease specialist and an intensivist. Various complications that may occur during hospitalization are usually handled by other specialists.

COVID-19 affects not only the respiratory tract, but also various organs throughout the body. Long COVID is currently a major problem. Now that the Omicron strain has become the predominant strain, the main symptoms are severe general malaise, chronic headache, taste disorder, and olfactory disturbance. These symptoms can be seen even after vaccination. When symptoms persist, they often interfere with work and daily life. Treatment requires the cooperation of specialists in internal medicine, otolaryngology, and psychiatry.

In addition to standard medical care, vaccination and disease education are also important. The roles of primary care physicians, who are in front-line contact with patients, and healthcare professionals working in business and government are also important.

It is important for healthcare professionals from various professions to cooperate with each other in the fight against COVID-19. In this lecture, I would like to introduce the current situation in Japan, which is facing an unprecedented infectious disease, and the efforts of "integrative medicine" in Japan.