Short Report of the 2nd Symposium and the 3rd Workshop on Intractable Itch in Juntendo University

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The Institute for Environmental and Gender-Specific Medicine, Juntendo University Graduate School of Medicine (the founding director; CEO Hideoki Ogawa, M.D., Ph.D.), was founded in 2002, supported by a grant of High-Tech Research Center Project for Private Universities; matching fund subsidy from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan. To date, we have conducted research in environmental and gender-specific medicine and related fields with the help of visiting faculty members and many collaborators. In 2013, we were awarded a grant of Strategic Research Foundation Grant-aided Project for Private Universities from MEXT, to support our project to elucidate pathogenic mechanisms and develop preventive and therapeutic methods targeting intractable itch. To further advance this project, which remains ongoing, we held the 2nd Symposium and the 3rd Workshop from 2015 to 2016 at Juntendo University. In brief, we here report on the 2nd Symposium and the 3rd Workshop on intractable itch.

Key words: itch, skin barrier, sphingolipids, spinal cord, trp channels

Aim and scope

Itch (or pruritus) has been defined as an unpleasant sensation that evokes the desire to scratch. Itch is also believed to signal danger from various environmental factors or physiological abnormalities. Clinically, intractable itch is a burdensome symptom that decreases quality of life (QOL), and frequently accompanies a variety of inflammatory skin conditions and systemic diseases. In some cases, intense itch decreases QOL more so than pain. Thus, development of antipruritic treatments requires an understanding of the fundamental mechanisms of itch1,2).

In 2013, we were awarded a grant of Strategic Research Foundation Grant-aided Project for Private Universities from MEXT, to support our project regarding intractable itch. In continuing the project to elucidate the pathogenic mechanisms and develop preventive and therapeutic methods targeting intractable itch, the 1st and 2nd Workshops and the 1st Symposium were held from 2013 to 2014 at Juntendo University3). To progress with this project, we held the 2nd Symposium and the 3rd Workshop in October, 2015 and April, 2016, respectively, at Juntendo University. In brief, we here report selected aspects of the 2nd Symposium and the 3rd Workshop.

Short report

On 10th October, 2015, the 2nd Symposium was held in the Century Tower at Juntendo University (Figure-1 and 2). There were 116 attendees (56
from Juntendo university and 60 from elsewhere) at the symposium which are comprised of 2 special lectures and 6 lectures by top scientists including itch researchers (Table-1).

On 23rd April, 2016, the 3rd Workshop on recent progress in the project of intractable itch was held in the same place at Juntendo University (Figure-3). There were 101 attendees (60 from Juntendo University and 41 from elsewhere) at the workshop which are comprised of 10 progress reports of basic and clinical aspects during a half-day (Table-2).

In both events, expertise spanned clinical and basic academia, and the opportunity for translation beyond was demonstrated by the presence of attendees from industry. All of the presentations were excellent, giving new insights regarding itch research. Prof. Yasuyuki Igarashi of Hokkaido University commented on this project (Figure-4). He gave positive evaluation that basic and clinical researchers work together to overcome intractable itch in this project. He also commented that he expects achievements of this organization will be of great help to patients with intractable itch and that this project will facilitate future drug discovery research for treatment of intractable itch, as a center of excellence in Japan.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare they have no conflicts of interest.
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References

