

WMA General Assembly, Chicago, 2017
Inauguration Speech
The 68th President of the World Medical Association
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President, World Medical Association
President, Japan Medical Association

I would like to express my deepest respect to all our distinguished guests and participants at today's assembly, as well as my colleagues.

Standing here before an audience comprising individuals with such great wisdom, experiences, and achievements to give my inauguration speech as President of the World Medical Association, WMA, is both the grandest moment in my life and the moment that I am most aware of the enormity of the responsibility this appointment brings.

I first of all vow to you all that I will do my utmost to fulfill my responsibilities in spite of any kind of difficulty in order to ensure the healthy life of all the people and further development of the WMA which supports it.

Mission of the JMA

In the Japan Medical Association, JMA, three presidents including myself have been appointed to the position of President of the WMA thus far.

As an organization representing physicians in Japan, the JMA

not only protects the health of the people of Japan but also proposes recommendations to ensure that Japanese healthcare is moving in the right direction, at times working in close collaboration with the government and ruling political party.

Amongst the WMA's National Medical Associations, NMAs, I believe that there are only a few where physicians contribute to and are involved in formulating actual national healthcare policies as the JMA does.

I greatly appreciate the high evaluation in which the JMA is held by many NMAs of the WMA.

My roots

I decided to stand as a candidate for President of the WMA at its General Assembly in Taipei last year because of a something which I strongly believe in.

This is that “I want to spread the concept of Japan's healthcare system and know-how—which have raised the healthy life expectancy of Japanese people to amongst the highest in the world—throughout the world.”

Today I would like to speak about this belief.

This belief partly originates from my own roots.

I was born and raised in Takata Village in Fukuoka

Prefecture.

As there was no doctor in the village at that time, my father, who was a military physician, established a small clinic there.

When I close my eyes, I can see my parents as they were then.

My father readily accepted any patient who needed treatment.

He poured effort into educating people about infectious diseases, and was a physician who endeavored to be always aware of the health status of local residents.

My mother was a person who would sell her own clothes, kimonos in order to buy medicines for impoverished patients who could not pay their medical fees.

Observing my parents as I grew up, I learned the spirit of healthcare, “To make every effort without regard for myself to help people before my eyes who are ill,” through my daily life.

Physician’s mission is to “examine the patient”.

The mission entails accompanying patients on their journey

through life, from birth until death, working together with them to make their lives healthier.

When I remember my father—who tended to be with local people in his work—I feel anew that his actions and attitude should be the “basis of healthcare”.

Looking to the current situation, the medical environment has been changing by rapid progress and use of ICT, AI and so on.

Now is precisely the time when we must return to basis of healthcare when we each pledged to “consecrate my life to the service of humanity” under the WMA Declaration of Geneva.

Physicians must apply these advanced technologies to daily medical practice as effective and safe tools.

The world moves at different speeds, and we are now rushing into a period of tremendous change—the aging society.

Leading the world, Japan is plunging into an explosively ultra-aging society with the postwar baby boomers reaching the age of 75 years in 2025.

As society ages, issues within the healthcare field are increasing.

I therefore propose realizing a “society of healthy longevity”

in which people are able to continue to participate actively in life even in old age.

This is a major issue that each country should cope with in the future.

Universal Health Coverage

In the rise in Japanese people's healthy longevity to the world's top level, "universal health coverage", "UHC" has played an essential role.

We are certain that "UHC" is also a key to creating models to guide aging societies, unprecedented in the world, towards a "sense of security".

Japan achieved a rapid growth in the postwar period.

This growth was possible to achieve because of the "UHC", the purpose of which was to enable people to "work with a sense of security".

Japan's healthcare system founded on UHC has even received high praise from the renowned medical journal *The Lancet*, and has also been lauded by the World Bank as a "global model" for UHC.

Furthermore, achievement of UHC was adopted by the United

Nations on September 25, 2015, as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This move was based on Japan's performance record rooted in our experience with UHC over more than 50 years, and expectations are held for Japan's leadership in this field.

By continuing to globally disseminate this excellent healthcare system in the future, we will be contributing to the realization of happiness and prosperity for people throughout the world.

Countermeasures to Disasters and Pollution

People in Japan have a long history of doing battle with air pollution and natural disasters.

With regard to air pollution and contamination during the period of high growth, it was the task of physicians to discover patients and identify causes of the disease.

At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, we put together JMATS (JMA Teams), with approximately 10,000 participating medical professionals from throughout the country entering the disaster zone in turns.

We have been able to move forward by transforming the past

experience in overcoming various disasters into a source of strength and wisdom.

Through the WMA, I intend to make good use of these experiences.

Infectious Diseases

Next, I would like to talk about infectious diseases.

In Japan's history, we have been able to reduce the number of tuberculosis patients in our nation.

Thus I am able to speak to countries troubled by a prevalence of TB.

Japan is also promoting countermeasures to emerging infectious diseases.

In November 2016, the 2nd WVA-WMA Global Conference on One Health was held in Fukuoka Prefecture.

By pooling their wisdom under the principles of "One Health", physicians and veterinarians are now promoting further countermeasures to infectious diseases.

Junior Doctors Network:

-Training junior doctors for the future-

The times are changing by the minute.

Issues facing healthcare on a global scale are changing form one after the other, becoming increasingly complex.

In order to tackle these issues seriously, training for junior doctors is absolutely essential.

Physicians who make every effort, without regard for themselves, to help people before their eyes who are ill, surmounting national boundaries, religious and ethnic differences, gender and language barriers.

Physicians who are deeply involved in improving the lives of the people living in the community, despite being a specialist in advanced medical care.

It is my intention to pour my utmost energies into the training of junior doctors in response to the demands of the times.

Mission of the WMA

Due to the progression of globalization, healthcare-related issues are also causing obstacles across national borders. As a means of resolving these issues, the role of the WMA is growing day-by-day.

The World Medical Association must endeavor to overcome

these difficulties to address wide-ranging issues in the healthcare field.

In order to achieve this, I believe that it will become increasingly important for healthcare professionals around the world to maintain close cooperation through the World Medical Association.

Going forward, as President of the WMA I will intend to listen with even greater earnestness to all of your voices with regard to the healthcare issues of any country and region and accelerate WMA efforts to resolve these issues.

Conclusion

Lastly, I would like to talk about my vision of what healthcare should be.

This was mentioned in a lecture by the late Japanese economist Hirofumi Uzawa when he was teaching at the University of Chicago's Department of Economics in the 1960s.

He referred to social systems for enabling all people to lead abundant lives and maintaining an attractive society as "Social Common Capital".

He positioned healthcare as one of these systems, alongside

the natural environment, roads, water supply, electricity, and education.

Professor Uzawa described the conditions as follows.

“The institutional, social, and financial conditions necessary for all people comprising the society to receive the very best healthcare that the society can provide at that time—regardless of their age or gender, and regardless of their economic or social circumstances—must be in place.”

Furthermore, once these conditions are in place, rules are necessary to ensure that they are maintained.

Although these rules may be harsh for use physicians, they may have even greater fulfillment and honor.

Professor Uzawa continued as follows.

“In both education and healthcare, professional specialists carry out their professional duties in accordance with professional standards and discipline, in the hope that all people in society will become happy and prosperous.”

Surely this expresses the essence of healthcare; the ideal form that healthcare should take.

I hope that the concept of healthcare will become “Social

Common Capital for the entire world” with everyone’s support.

I do also hope to lead the World Medical Association forward into the future.