

WMA General Assembly, Reykjavik 2018

Valedictory Address
Yoshitake Yokokura, MD
President
World Medical Association

Thank you, Chair.

His Excellency, Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, President of Iceland,

Distinguished guests.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

One year has passed since October 2017 when I was inaugurated the 68th WMA President.

This picture was taken after the inauguration ceremony. I feel that all these people coming from the developing and advanced countries, beyond race, are looking forward to the future of global health care with a smile. I have used it as the opening slide of my presentation to introduce the activities of WMA.

I visited various countries as WMA President and participated in many events in the past year.

In the greetings and presentations in the events I have suggested promotion of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). In the inaugural speech, I mentioned that there was a universal health insurance which pushed Japan's average life expectancy to the world's top level. I also advocated efforts in the aged society in which with healthy life expectancy extended, the society which supports the elderly is changed to the society which the elderly supports.

This graph shows historical changes in mortality rate in Japan by major five causes of death in 1947-2016. Tuberculosis, which marked 146,000 in death toll in 1947, sharply declined since 1951 when the TB control law was enacted. It can be seen that this contributed greatly to the achievement of universal health insurance in Japan in 1961.

Trends in medical expenses for TB have been declining to 27.7% in 1954, 15.7% in 1961 and as low as 0.09% in 2009. This indicates that TB control has achieved great results.

This slide shows 5 year survival rate of cancer patients in Japan. The survival rate has been improved by implementing the Cancer Basic Countermeasures Act with the joint efforts among the central government, local governments and medical community.

This graph shows the current average life expectancy in Japan. It is 80.98 for males and 87.14 for females in 2016. And for healthy life expectancy, 72.14 for males and 74.79 for females.

The JMA has been doing various efforts to extend healthy life expectancy. There are health promotion activities for the public. They are “Health Japan 21” led by the government, the Japan Health Council in which the private sector works together, and the Diabetes Countermeasures Promotion Council that the JMA is working for with specialty societies. Through these efforts, the Japanese average life expectancy stays in the world top level in 2016.

I would like to talk about the promotion of UHC.

To achieve UHC in Japan, it took about 40 years since the health insurance law was enacted in 1922. It is clear that this system has contributed greatly to Japanese health and longevity.

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), built on the principle of “leaving no one behind”. Goal 3 states to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

The UHC Forum 2017 was jointly organized by the Japanese government, WHO, World Bank, UNICEF and others in Tokyo. At this occasion, we invited Dr. Tedros, Director General of WHO, to dinner which was planned by the Japanese government, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and Parliament members who are supporting me.

In the UHC Forum in Tokyo, the declaration for UHC was supported by many global leaders including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Heads of WHO, World Bank, UNICEF, WMA and a remarkable array of leaders. Through this forum, UHC became a global goal for national health policy of the countries.

As WMA President, I stated that the WMA will promote UHC together with 114 member associations. The forum adopted the Tokyo Declaration of UHC reaffirming Health for All. In the declaration, we call for greater commitment to accelerate progress towards UHC.

As WMA President, I exchanged the MOU with Dr. Tedros at the WHO headquarters in Geneva on April 5th this year to promote UHC and strengthen Emergency Disaster Preparedness.

Lecture of promoting UHC was made by the WHO senior advisor after the MOU exchange. The National UHC road map was presented. He suggested the WHO supports for the WMA engagement to contribute to physician’s capacity building in countries, national policy dialogue on health workforce and global advocacy for workforce investment, for example in the occasion of G20

Osaka summit in June 2019.

It was planned to hold Health Professional Meeting 20 or H20 to discuss UHC promotion with the WHO leadership, the six regional offices, and medical associations of each region of WMA.

This plan was agreed by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare, and Parliament members.

I visited several International organizations with Dr. Kloiber at the occasion of the exchanging MOU with WHO.

I would like to talk about the United Nations General Assembly.

I attended the United Nations General Assembly held in New York last week.

I was invited to be a speaker as WMA President to the high level meeting on NCDs.

The theme given to me was about mental health and well-being. I took up dementia and mentioned the importance of school health and food education in appealing the necessity of control of obesity in children.

I stressed that in order to address the issue about NCDs, it is necessary to build a strong health care system based on physician-led primary care and a cooperative work of public and private sectors.

I was elected to JMA President for the fourth term in this June. The term of office is two years until June 2020. I will continue to support the activities of WMA led by Dr. Leonid Eidelman especially for promotion of UHC.

I am grateful for the warm support of all the member associations, Dr. Ardis Hoven, Chair and the WMA secretariat led by Dr. Otmar Kloiber.

I sincerely thank all of you that I was able to spend such a fulfilling year as WMA President

Thank you very much for your attention