

Now Is the Time for Us to Take a Great Leap Forward

JMAJ 52(6): 484–485, 2009

Yasunori YOSHIMURA*¹

Perinatal medicine in Japan today remains in a critical situation both for the general public and for health care personnel. As medical professionals who bear a major responsibility for providing safe, reliable obstetric and gynecologic care to the general public, we, the members of the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology (JSOG), must overcome this state of affairs and fulfill the trust society has placed in us. Fortunately, thanks to the untiring efforts of our members, a variety of problems involving perinatal medicine have finally been recognized by society, and policies designed to improve perinatal care are now being earnestly implemented by the national government as well as local governments. Of course, when we speak of perinatal care, the beneficiary of these medical services is the society of tomorrow, and I believe that additional official assistance from the national and local governments is necessary to maintain the medical care delivery system and provide support to the public.

The momentum for improving maternal and newborn health continues in Japan, where the rates of maternal and perinatal mortality have been dramatically reduced. Reproductive medicine has recently produced splendid improvements and contributed to the achievement of greater results in the treatment of infertility. Reproductive treatments have spread rapidly on a global basis in recent years and are being applied in Japan with excellent results. For gynecological malignancies, multidisciplinary approaches including surgery, radiation and chemo- or hormonal therapy have enhanced results significantly at several medical institutions. Furthermore, laparoscopic surgery has become a new surgical procedure for treating many gynecological disorders, including malig-

nancies, during the past ten years. Following in the footsteps of our predecessors, the leaders of our society have set our goal to achieve an ideal environment where women and children can enjoy the benefits of medicine.

The public is now demanding specialists in a wide variety of areas, and the Society has the social mission of training specialists who are capable of providing good quality, safe obstetric and gynecologic care to the public and of standardizing treatment in institutions. Recently, subspecialties have been established independently by several medical societies. Under this categorization, the four fields of obstetric and gynecologic clinical practice—reproductive medicine, perinatal medicine, gynecologic oncology, and perimenopausal medicine—are regarded as being specialties. In order to acquire specialization in related areas, it is first necessary to acquire comprehensive basic knowledge and techniques in the field of obstetrics and gynecology as a whole, then accumulate training in the subspecialties, with board certification by the JSOG occupying a core position in each subspecialty. For this reason, improving the education system for training specialists is also an extremely important issue, and I believe this will be linked to the provision of high quality obstetric and gynecologic care.

We are attempting to invigorate learning and clinical practice within the Society, and ensuring that there are young physicians who specialize in obstetrics and gynecology is an important task in order to enable further development in the field. In 2007, we started holding Summer Schools in the Shinshu district of Japan for junior residents and medical students. Each year junior residents and medical students from throughout Japan have

*1 Chairperson of the Executive Board, Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Tokyo, Japan. Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Keio University School of Medicine, Tokyo, Japan (yasu@sc.itc.keio.ac.jp).

participated, and we have conducted ultrasound, laparoscopy, and neonatal resuscitation in hands-on seminars, with participants highly praising the program content as “excellent.” Furthermore, in view of the current shortage of obstetricians and gynecologists, a scholarship system has been inaugurated by sympathetic businesses, and financial support is being provided for the assignment of medical students who desire to become obstetricians and gynecologists.

Obstetrics and Gynecology is a future-oriented form of medical care directed towards future generations, while at the same time calls are being made for expansion of the profession as a supportive form of comprehensive medical care that serves women’s health needs throughout their lives. I believe that the Society should now focus on training healthcare workers who are on their way to becoming leaders in their profession

so that we may fulfill the trust the public has placed in us, as well as on advancing learning, which was the original purpose of the Society. Teaching young physicians the importance and the appeal of academic basic research is crucial, and it is my fervent hope that these physicians will invigorate medical care, which currently seems to be stagnating, through approaches that genuinely stress academic medical science.

The world is currently facing an unprecedented financial and economic crisis. In the midst of the uncertainty about what lies ahead, I sincerely hope that all of the members of the JSOG will practice obstetric and gynecologic care that enables people to have dreams for the future and that the young obstetricians and gynecologists who will lead the next generation restore the gleam in their eyes.