

History of Hirosaki University Medical Association

JMAJ 54(1): 51–52, 2011

Kei SATOH,*¹ Katsumi HANADA*²

Development

The Hirosaki University Medical Association was established in 1987 at the instigation of the Aomori Medical Association. The faculty council of the Hirosaki University School of Medicine began discussions at the initial request of the Aomori Medical Association in 1985 that then took the course of working towards the formation of a medical association. An advisory body on the question of forming the medical association was launched within the School of Medicine, and in 1987 established a basic policy for ultimate formation of the medical association.

On 26 December 1987, the Hirosaki University Medical Association held its inaugural ceremony and its first general assembly at the Hirosaki Medical Association hall. Dr. Inomata Tadashi, president of the Aomori Medical Association, and Dr. Tsuta Masakuni, president of the Hirosaki Medical Association, offered remarks as guest speakers. The general assembly adopted articles of association and elected officers including board members, president and vice presidents. Elected were Prof. Shinagawa Shinryo of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology as the association's first president, and Prof. Yoshida Yutaka of the Department of Internal Medicine I and Prof. Matsuyama Shuichi of the Department of Ophthalmology as vice presidents. Successive presidents were Prof. Matsuyama Shuichi (1989–98), Prof. Harata Seikou (Orthopedics, 1998–99), Prof. Saito Yoshiharu (Obstetrics and Gynecology, 1999–2000), Prof. Suzuki Tadashi (Urology, 2000–01), Prof. Matsuki Akitomo (Anesthesiology,

2001–03), and Prof. Yasujima Minoru (Laboratory Medicine, 2003–08). The incumbent president since 2008 is Prof. Shinkawa Hideichi of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology.

The membership of the Hirosaki University Medical Association at the time of its inauguration is recorded as 80, a membership that sadly has fallen gradually over time to its present level of 47 as of April 2010. According to the articles of association, those qualified for membership are “physicians on the register of Hirosaki University” and the association is to designate one president, two vice presidents, several board members and two auditors. Additionally, the dean of its school of medicine and the director of its hospital are to serve as advisors.

Primary Activities

While the Hirosaki University Medical Association has conducted a wide range of activities to date, what it has conducted continuously is the Hirosaki University Medical Association Educational Lectures program. Since the first such lecture in March 1991, these have been offered once or twice annually. While most have been based on the results of studies conducted by the teaching staff of the Hirosaki University School of Medicine, the association does on occasion welcome speakers from outside the school and some lectures are made open to the general public. Recent lectures have primarily been by new appointments to professorships in the School of Medicine. All have been undertaken under joint auspices with the Hirosaki Medical Association

*1 Dean, Hirosaki University School of Medicine, Hirosaki, Aomori, Japan (pathophy@cc.hirosaki-u.ac.jp).

*2 Director, Hirosaki University Hospital, Hirosaki, Aomori, Japan.

This article was prepared by the authors and Counsels of Hirosaki University Medical Association.

and have welcomed numerous participants in addition to university medical association members, including physicians and researchers from Hirosaki University and elsewhere. Video recordings of the lectures are retained and made available for viewing as part of the association's continuing medical education library.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Hirosaki University Medical Association, on 1 December 2007 the association held public lectures, a commemoration ceremony and a celebration at the Hotel New Castle in Hirosaki city under the leadership of Prof. Yasujima Minoru. Hosted jointly with the Hirosaki University School of Medicine and presided over by Prof. Nakaji Shigeyuki of the Department of Social Medicine, the public lectures on the theme of community healthcare featured presentations by Dr. Kumasaka Yoshihiro, then mayor of the city of Miyako in Iwate prefecture; Mr. Shibutani Tohru, secretary general of the Tsugaru Large Area Emergency Support Group; and Dr. Hanada Katsumi, director of the Hirosaki University Hospital. Members of the general public attending participated in a discussion on issues in community healthcare centered on the Tsugaru region of Aomori prefecture and the way forward in their resolution. Dr. Sasaki Giro, president of the Aomori Medical Association, and Dr. Tamura Mizuo, president of the Hirosaki Medical Association, offered congratulatory addresses at the commemoration ceremony and celebration, and past officers of the Hirosaki University Medical Association also participated in this milestone event.

An additional effort that might be reckoned unique is the Hirosaki University Medical Association Publishing Company. Unfortunately, the Hirosaki University Press was also established around the time of the launch of the association press, which is at present on hiatus. Its sole publication is Dr. Hinohara Shigeaki's *Perspective on 21st Century Medicine Deferring to Sir*

William Osler (English translation by the first author), the record of a lecture series.

Challenges in Prospect

The Hirosaki University Medical Association has participated in the National Liaison Council of University Medical Associations since its launch in August 2006 and has been involved with a range of issues on a national level. Working to shore up such activities requires shoring up our own foundations, and an important issue we face would be that medical association membership accounts for only a tenth and some of the licensed physicians affiliated with the university. Many young physicians are gaining experience on assignment in rotation among components of the network comprising Hirosaki University and local medical institutions, and one reason for the low membership ratio would be that few settle in at the university. Unfortunately, a lack of familiarity with medical association activities leaves those eligible unaware of opportunity or positive reason to join. The university medical association serves as a feeder to the prefectural and national medical associations, and promoting membership in it will require the revitalization of the university medical association, increased awareness of its availability, and greater publicity of medical association activities as a whole, including those of the JMA.

It is now around a quarter of a century since the Hirosaki University Medical Association was established. While moving in tandem with the Graduate School of Medicine and University Hospital on numerous such issues as medical education, medical school enrollments and clinical studies regimes, coordination with other medical associations will also be an important role of the university medical association. If the past quarter-century has been the period in which the Hirosaki University Medical Association took wing, much will now be expected of it in future.