

### Thoughts on my involvement on the international activities of the JMA

It is now eight years since I became the JMA Executive Board Member in charge of international affairs and subsequently became involved in the activities of the World Medical Association (WMA). I initially served as a council member, and since 2009 I have served as Vice-Chair of Council.

Looking back at my involvement in international activities thus far (as it is by no means over just yet), one activity in which it was a particular pleasure for me to participate was the process of revising the “WMA Declaration of Madrid on Professional Autonomy and Self-Regulation,” which was adopted in 1987. As the member of Working Group (WG), I was involved in the process of dividing this declaration into two separate declarations: the new “Declaration of Seoul on Professional Autonomy and Clinical Independence” (2008),<sup>\*1</sup> and the completely overhauled Declaration of Madrid, renamed the “Declaration of Madrid on Professionally-led Regulation” (2009).<sup>\*2</sup> The former deals with the spiritual core of professional autonomy, while the latter provides practical guidelines as professionally-led regulations for all physicians.

I am truly satisfied that the important term “Professional Autonomy” was retained as a key word, especially since at one point it seemed as though the term would be excluded from both declarations. “Autonomy” comes from a concept espoused by the philosopher Immanuel Kant. I am certain that no other term can as suitably express the circumstances that are necessary for physicians to carry out the process of making decisions for our patients with clinical independence. If this kind of self-regulation is interfered with due to monetary or social circumstances, people will lose their trust in physicians as prescribed under the “WMA Declaration of Geneva”<sup>\*3</sup>—the modernized, English version of the Hippocratic Oath—and physicians will face many difficulties in obtaining basic informed

consent for necessary treatments. The physician-patient relationship is a special one, and must not be changed.

The “Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects” (DoH)<sup>\*4</sup> is a statement issued by the WMA establishing ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. Although the DoH is primarily aimed at physicians, other participants in medical research involving human subjects are also encouraged to follow these principles. The DoH has been repeatedly revised to keep pace with the rapid advancement of the medical field. As a member of the WMA Working Group carrying out these revisions, I was involved in the two most recent revision processes. The first of these took place in Seoul in 2008, while the second revision is on-going, having now continued for more than two years as WG members attempt to accommodate various requests regarding the DoH. This means that in practical terms I myself have now been engaged in the DoH revision process for seven years. Adopted in Finland in 1964, next year the DoH will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

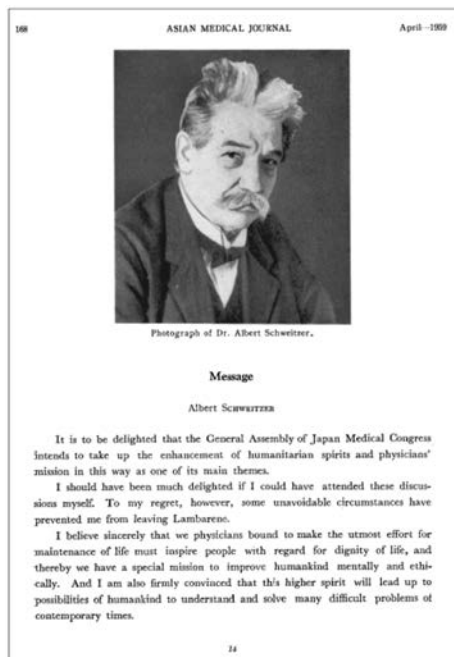
Established in 1983 within the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) in Boston to promote contributions to global health, the Takemi Program in International Health celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. This program is a solid bridge linking Boston and Tokyo, and Japan has also sent numerous young people to study at HSPH as Takemi Fellows. It was founded by Dr. Taro Takemi, who served as President of both the Japan Medical Association (1957–1982) and World Medical Association (1975–1976), and has been maintained through the support of the JMA and member organizations of the Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association. Thus far the program has given birth to 242 Takemi Fellows, including 52 from Japan, with alumni now forming a global network. We are currently making preparations for 30th anniversary celebratory symposiums to be held in Boston and

\*1 <http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/a30/>.

\*2 <http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/r4/index.html>.

\*3 <http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/g1/>.

\*4 <http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/>.



Tokyo, and I am delighted to say that the JMA has been receiving many donations to assist us in this endeavor.

In September, the “APEC Healthcare Stakeholders Awareness High-Level Meeting” was held in Denpasar, Bali. One of the objectives of this meeting was to formulate a final draft of the “Healthcare Stakeholders Statement on Fostering Ethical Environments in the Medical Device and Biopharmaceutical Sectors,” which is to provide a foundation for promoting regional economic activity. I was invited to act as a commentator, a task I was delighted to accept because—as mentioned above—we physicians have international ethical guidelines in the form of the WMA “Declaration of Geneva,” “Declaration of Helsinki,” “Declaration of Seoul,” and “Declaration of Madrid” and are therefore ready to join together with other medical professionals to create an agreement for all medical profes-

sionals to promote the health and well-being of people in the Asia-Pacific Region. I am convinced that economic prosperity should contribute to the enhancement of people’s lives, but not vice-versa.

Recently, I discovered in an old issue of the Asian Medical Journal (AMJ) a letter from Dr. Albert Schweitzer to the JMA; in it he apologizes for being unable to accept an invitation to visit Japan from Taro Takemi, who at the time had just been elected President of the JMA, but sends us a sincere message as a fellow physician:

*It is to be delighted that the General Assembly of Japan Medical Congress intends to take up the enhancement of humanitarian spirits and physicians’ mission in this way as one of its main themes.*

*I should have been much delighted if I could have attended these discussions myself. To my regret, however, some unavoidable circumstances have prevented me from leaving Lambarene.*

*I believe sincerely that we physicians bound to make the utmost effort for maintenance of life must inspire people with regard for dignity of life, and thereby we have a special mission to improve humankind mentally and ethically. And I am also firmly convinced that this higher spirit will lead up to possibilities of humankind to understand and solve many difficult problems of contemporary times.\*5*

The AMJ was the predecessor of the Japan Medical Association Journal (JMAJ). Dr. Schweitzer’s message has lost none of its spiritual power and resonates all the more amidst today’s fluctuating situation. I feel honored to have been engaged in various duties as Editor-in-Chief of the JMAJ over these past eight years.

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\*5 AMJ. 1959;2(4):168. <http://www.med.or.jp/english/journal/amj/0204/0204.pdf>