

Transitioning seasons

The changing of the seasons gradually progress through the year from the south to the north of the land of Japan, which consists of five main islands and about 7,000 medium- and small-sized islands stretching over 2,000 km. In spring time, the cherry blossoms start as early as February at the southernmost limit in the country and move toward the northernmost limit over three months. The local blooming season in any area is very short because the flowers last only for two weeks. Since the blooms are short-lived, it is customary for the people of Japan to gather around the cherry trees in full bloom with family members, coworkers, or friends during the so-called *hanami* [flower-watching] season and enjoy picnics and parties while indulging in the beauty of the flowers and appreciating the onset of spring. In May, the arrival of early summer with fresh verdure is refreshing, but it is followed by the humid and wet season called *tsuyu* that starts in June with many rainy days. The *tsuyu* ends from the west to the east in July, and the hot summer immediately engulfs Japan.

The fiscal year of the Japan Medical Association (JMA) begins at the end of June. Year 2016 is the election year of the JMA board, and President Yoshitake Yokokura has just started his third term with a new lineup of board members. A new board member has also been

appointed in charge of international affairs, and the circumstances surrounding the JMAJ are also set to change.

Since its first issue in 1958, the JMAJ has been playing the role of introducing Japanese healthcare to the world through the JMA's activities in English. Following the World Medical Journal, the JMAJ became an electronic journal in 2014.

Besides the JMAJ, other tools that the JMA has to introduce its activities include the JMA's English website, and the Facebook site focusing on international activities. Facebook has the advantage of reaching simultaneously and instantly; an activity can be posted with pictures on the very same day. Enhancing the English website would be the next challenge.

The methods of sending information, and the speed with which they can be sent, are fast growing and accelerating, with the amount of data that can be transmitted and received increasing day by day. Now that the JMAJ is an all-electronic journal, we, the editorial staff, will make all efforts to release each issue on time and endeavor to post information about the healthcare of Japan to people across the world.

Yuji NOTO, Manager, International Affairs Division, Japan Medical Association; Managing Editor, JMAJ (noto@po.med.or.jp).