

JMA President Dr. Yokokura Was Elected to the WMA Presidency*¹

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Japan Medical Association

The World Medical Association (WMA) General Assembly in Taipei was held on October 19-22, 2016, in Taipei, Taiwan. It should be particularly noted that the Japan Medical Association (JMA) President Yoshitake Yokokura became the President-Elect of the WMA at the election that took place during the plenary session on October 22. Three other candidacies stood in the election, one each from the Chinese Medical Association, the Croatia Medical Association, and the Nigeria Medical Association. Dr. Yokokura will serve as the WMA President-elect for a year before being inaugurated as the WMA President at the General Assembly in Chicago in October 2017.

Dr. Yokokura held a press conference on October 26 after returning to Japan as the next President of the WMA. He acknowledged that it is a great honor for himself and for JMA. He expressed his aspiration that “It has renewed my strong determination for my posts to fulfill my duty even more firmly,” and made the following 2 points.

(1) JMA sometimes engages in a heated discussion with the government and the ruling party while maintaining a close relationship with them in its effort to provide appropriate healthcare to the people of Japan and lead the healthcare of Japan in the correct direction. The organization represents all types of physicians across the nation and its stance is highly appreciated by many other national medical associations of the WMA.

(2) There are few national medical associations in the WMA that maintain a face-to-face relationship with a national government that Japan does. For many developing countries, particularly



Dr. Yoshitake Yokokura, President-Elect at the WMA General Assembly in Taipei, Taiwan



With Dr. Ketan Desai (President) and Sir Michael Marmot (Immediate Past President)

in Africa and Asia, joining the WMA is one of the means to protect national healthcare. Those countries are counting on and looking forward to the activities, declarations, resolutions, and statements of the WMA, and seeking help.

He then continued to say “I am aware that those national medical associations will have even more expectations of the WMA when the JMA President is also serving as the WMA Pres-

*¹ This is an extracted and English-translated version of an article in the JMA News (November 20 2016 Issue) about the press conference held on October 26, 2016.

ident. I shall ensure that I live up to their expectations and address them.”

Dr. Yokokura also mentioned that globalization has brought about many transboundary problems in healthcare that are global in scale, and the WMA has been playing an extremely significant role as the driver in solving these problems. Pressing issues, such as Healthcare in Danger, climate change, and problems pertaining to the social determinants of health, require the WMA to make urgent efforts.

He further announced that as the CMAAO President he will be hosting the General Assembly of the Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania (CMAAO) under the theme “the terminal illness of aging” in Tokyo in September 2017. He plans to summarize the opinions of the countries in the CMAAO region and provide feedback to the WMA. As the JMA President, who is also deeply involved in the activities of both the CMAAO and the WMA, he stated that his mission is to energize the activities of the CMAAO, bring the CMAAO even closer to the WMA, and ensure the voices of physicians in the Asia-Oceania region are brought to the WMA.

Dr. Yokokura also recalled the statement he made in the policy address*² when he started a third term of his presidency, in which he said “I

will work to further enhance Japan’s healthcare system, which has pushed healthy life expectancy to the world’s highest level, to the level of a global model that can provide a true ‘sense of security’ to a super-aged society never before experienced in the world.” He reminded listeners that the WMA needs to work on a wide range of healthcare problems because various countries in the world have different endemic health issues.

Dr. Yokokura also stated his opinion that fostering young physicians who can meet the needs of the time and preparing their work environment accordingly are very important. He made the assurance that he would firmly support the activities of young physicians through the World Medical Association Junior Doctors Network (JDN).

Lastly, he concluded by saying that “A physician’s mission is to create an environment in which all people can live healthy and safe lives. To do so, physicians from all over the world need to maintain an intimate collaboration with each other through the WMA.” He clearly showed his determination to elevate the presence of the WMA as much as possible, make its activities known to the public, and bring about further achievements.

*² Please refer to pgs 141-144 of this JMAJ issue.