

French Medical Association and a Debate on Environment and Health

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Introduction of French Medical Association

The French Medical Association (Association Médicale Française, AMF)^{*3} was created on December 22, 1992. Through its own activities and within various international medical bodies, including the World Medical Association (WMA), AMF endeavors to reach the highest possible standards in medical ethics, medical training, quality of healthcare services, professional practice, public health and human rights connected with individual and collective health.

AMF helps practitioners and protects patients by providing accurate information and representation for health professionals.

AMF takes part in ongoing thinking and debates on patients' rights, children's rights, medical task assignment, the International Code of Medical Ethics, medical liability, medical staff independence, the Declaration of Helsinki, counterfeit drugs, health and climate change, health hazard alerts, etc.

AMF helps National Medical Associations (NMA) in developing countries, especially French-speaking countries, to participate alongside with AMF in ongoing debates taking place in international medical bodies, once approved by those bodies.

Through meetings, seminars and team work, AMF hopes to contribute to a medical diplomacy by and for physicians, in order to preserve professional independence.

AMF wishes to develop a collaborating spirit with other NMAs in the world in order to propose, compare and confirm achievements obtained

through debates and consensus, in the best interest of patients. These reflexions and actions will enable to maintain the profession's international independence and to disseminate proved knowledge.

Health Topics on the International Agenda

AMF wishes thus to share its thoughts and proposals on health topics on the international agenda. Measures and actions taken by NMAs should complement and support those taken by international organizations in their fight against pandemics like HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis.... New challenges are emerging that health practitioners will have to deal with: pollution, climate change, water management, food security, migrations, etc.

Today, two types of philosophy for medical practice coexist: molecular medicine based on detection of viral and bacterial pathogens on the one hand and preventive and environmental medicine on the other. The first one needs economical and scientific means and programming, while the second one expects health professional to act as responsible independent specialists working in networks with devolution to other health professionals.

In the first philosophy, the physician is thought to seek for a proved knowledge, while taking into account a good balance between cost and performance. In the second philosophy, the physician is thought to seek for prospective grassroots action where cost and performance is not easily measured.

The first philosophy translates into infor-

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mation and knowledge dissemination, while the second one translates into communication and interaction between health professionals and with their environment. Within WMA, AMF has been closely following this change of paradigm for health services delivery, as shown in the partnerships AMF has extended to African NMAs.

Impact of Environment and Health

AMF would be willing to open a debate on the impact of environment and health in small island areas threatened by climate change, as well as in large semi-desert areas. AMF could, for example, join in participating in shared database on public

health in islands of the Pacific, in a cooperation with NMAs of these islands-states, as well as with NMAs of the Pacific Ocean shore states such as Japan, Korea, Australia, Indonesia, New-Zealand, Canada, USA, Peru, Ecuador, India, etc., and partners states such as UK, France, etc... for organising and mentoring. Indeed health issues for those island populations are relevant models for tomorrow public health issues at stake in the world.

Acknowledgments

The President and all members of AMF extend their warmest friendly greetings to their fellow colleagues of the Japan Medical Association (JMA).

Comments

Comments from Korean Medical Association

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I would like to thank Dr. Calloc'h and French Medical Association (AMF) for the suggestion to jointly deal with the issue of climate change within the framework of human security especially for the impact in small island areas and large semi-desert areas. It is the issue that risks the future of human beings and physicians should take initiatives in reducing its impact on human security.

I learned that there is an organization named Association Sante Environment France in France and it takes initiatives to raise awareness of environmental problems among medical professions. I think its activities set a good example to refer to.

Even though we turn to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the global warming is expected to continue to take a toll on the earth over 100 years. This means mitigation and adaptation is urgently needed. As Dr. Calloc'h mentioned, small island areas and semi-desert areas are most

vulnerable to climate change and efforts should be made to help develop preparedness in those areas.

Establishment of preparedness system should be dealt under the aspect of humanitarian aids and the World Medical Association (WMA) and national medical associations should play a pivotal role in this. Taking medical profession's role and obligation seriously, WMA had adopted the Declaration of Delhi in 2009 at its General Assembly. The Declaration of Delhi highlights the health consequences of climate change and urges national medical associations and physicians around the world to take actions to solve the problem. As guidelines for such actions, it stresses out advocacy to combat global warming, leadership to help people mitigate and adapt to climate change, education and capacity building, surveillance and research, and collaboration for building preparedness. This declaration was thor-

oroughly reviewed by experts and stakeholders as well as WMA members before its adoption. WMA seminar on climate change and health care which was held in Copenhagen in 2009 provided a platform to exchange views and experiences among experts, stakeholders and WMA members on the issue. I think this presents a good way to communicate and collaborate among various organizations on important common issues. Experiences from this collaboration

would lay solid foundation for the development of effective procedures in opening a debate on the impact of environment and health in small island areas as well as semi-desert areas.

Thank you once again for Dr. Calloc'h and AMF's suggestion and Korean Medical Association will actively participate in this.

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The Japan Medical Association's Initiatives on Environmental Health

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Introduction

Considering environmental protection to be one part of human security described in the human development report of United Nations Development Program (UNDP),¹ until now the Japan Medical Association (JMA) has strived to advance environmental health activities to resolve problems related to the health impacts of the environmental factors, in both domestic and international venues. These initiatives began with the issue of pollution, an issue to which the JMA has responded aggressively, for example by establishing a committee to study the Basic Law for Environmental Pollution Control in 1966, prior to the establishment of related laws by the national government of Japan.

However, recent years have seen advancement of the globalization of environmental issues, as symbolized by issues such as those of endocrine disrupters and climate change. This has resulted in the appearance of environmental health issues that differ from those of the past, leading to concerns about the spread of new health impacts as a result.

Declaration on the environment

To make clear its approach in response to such diversifying environmental issues, in April 2009 the JMA adopted a declaration on the environ-

ment.² Based on the recognition that preservation of the earth's environment and creation of a sustainable society are essential to the future survival of humanity, this declaration identifies the following four main pillars and declares that the JMA will address these aggressively:

- (1) Promote healthcare activities that are environment-friendly
- (2) Promote environmental health education
- (3) Provide the general public with education on the importance of environmental health and support practicable environmental health activities
- (4) Lobby the government to create a safe and secure environment

Initiatives in response to climate change

As specific initiatives, effort will be focused on initiatives in response to global warming in particular. In recent years, the heat-island effect has intensified in the Tokyo area, and since roughly 1993 the number of deaths from heat stroke has increased rapidly. In addition, Japan has been through two oil shocks, one in 1973 and the other in 1979, experiencing at first hand the importance of the energy issue, and consequently it has worked proactively to promote energy conservation and utilization of natural energy sources. At present, Japan is considered to have world-

Table 1 Voluntary action plan for global warming in hospitals

1. Make preparations for promoting global warming countermeasures at hospitals
2. Make active efforts to implement global warming countermeasures
3. Expand daily actions to conserve energy
4. Take action to reduce the use of dinitrogen monoxide in the practice of medicine
5. Respond to renewal efforts to reduce CO₂
6. Enhance the reliability and effectiveness of the Voluntary Action Plan

leading abilities in areas such as technological development in the field of utilization of natural energy sources such as solar power. At the same time, medical institutions have the essential role of improving healthcare environments including hospital facilities, to make them more comfortable. For this reason, facilities' global-warming countermeasures have not advanced smoothly in many cases.

Based on this unique nature of the medical field, the JMA established a committee for global warming countermeasure in 2007. Also, in August 2008 it formulated, through consultation with four major hospital organizations, the Voluntary Action Plan for Global Warming in Hospitals (**Table 1**).³ This plan takes into comprehensive consideration the factors affecting management decision-making, such as balancing improvements to the healthcare environment with energy conservation.

Furthermore, to ensure the effectiveness of this Voluntary Action Plan, in 2009 a new council on promotion of countermeasures against global warming was established with the participation of the JMA, the four major hospital organizations, and prefecture medical associations, carrying out surveys and consultation on a practical level concerning promotion of global-warming countermeasures at medical institutions.

Closing

Medical associations have the mission of protecting the health of the public. For this reason, efforts by medical associations to address health-related environmental issues are highly significant. We hope that the JMA's communication of its intent to address environmental issues on its own, based on its declaration on the environment, will lead to increased understanding of the global environment throughout the field of medicine in Japan and to further advancement of practical efforts to address environmental issues at individual medical institutions.

References

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