

Looking back over the year 2011

In this issue of the JMAJ, there are two major topics. The first is the problem of placebo control in clinical trials viewed from a historical perspective and our thoughts on the ongoing revision process of the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH), in which we were involved as members of the WMA working group. It seems that the importance of the DoH is increasing in the global community for many reasons. The WMA is planning a complete revision of the DoH for 2014, which is the 50-year anniversary of this declaration.

The second topic is organ donation in Japan from brain-dead donors in view of support for organ donation facilities and pediatric organ transplantation under the revised Organ Transplant Act. These issues exist in a field of increasing importance that is to be discussed in the upcoming process of revising the DoH and organ donation: respect for the dignity of human rights and careful consideration of human materials which are provided for everyday medical practices through laboratory experiments with the rapid progress of medical research, including gene technology.

It was a hard year for the JMA as we dealt with the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami followed by radiation exposure due to the problems at the Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi

Nuclear Power Plant. The JMA played a major role in providing medical support for the afflicted areas. There were also many problems to be solved in order to accomplish the rebuilding of community health in the affected regions. I was involved in dealing with these problems both as an inhabitant of the affected zone in Fukushima Prefecture and as the executive board member of the JMA in charge of emergency and disaster medicine. After tackling these tasks, I developed cholecystitis and was admitted to the hospital to undergo a laparoscopic cholecystectomy. It was a new experience to sit on both sides of the medical fence as a physician and a patient. Fortunately I was able to recover smoothly and get back to my work again because of the excellent treatment I received under Japan's universal health care system.

I therefore experienced many aspects of the medical field myself during 2011. I would like to honestly say that Japan's health system not only helped me at a difficult time but was a real safety net for the people and the society of Japan, to which community health belongs, in the year 2011.

Masami ISHII, Executive Board Member, Japan Medical Association (jmaintf@po.med.or.jp); Vice-Chair of Council, World Medical Association; Secretary General, Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania (CMAAO).