

### Special Feature

*Should medical accidents be judged in criminal court?—Establishing a new patient safety system in Japan*

## Preface

This special issue, featuring the current status and future of the accountability problem and processing system of medical accidents in Japan, is the achievement of the Japan Medical Association Research Institute Symposium “Trust in Medicine—Learning from the criminal cases that are found not guilty” held on July 20, 2011.

This symposium was originally scheduled to be held in April of 2011, but the event was postponed due to the Great East Japan Disaster that occurred on March 11, 2011. Then, in response to the strong demands of member physicians, the symposium was re-scheduled in July.

The Great East Japan Disaster was an unprecedented catastrophe. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt condolences to those who lost their lives in the disaster and my deep sympathy to the people in the disaster areas who are forced to live in temporary housing in difficult conditions. We, the Japan Medical Association (JMA), are accumulating wisdom and knowledge and striving to help the recovery with our full strength.

Despite concern over power shortages in the

extremely hot weather, participants arrived from all over the country, completely filling the venue. This shows that many doctors in Japan are very much concerned that their medical acts could result in criminal penalties. It also demonstrates their strong interest in the establishment of a third-party agency that will investigate the causes of medical accidents.

People seek treatment when sick or injured, and doctors exist to provide treatment to patients. Antagonism between the two parties would be a tragedy for both.

As the largest organization representing doctors in Japan, JMA is making efforts to communicate the current status of medical practice to the people of Japan in an easily comprehensible manner. We also convey such information to people overseas to share our accumulated experience and knowledge with fellow medical practitioners internationally.

It is my sincere hope that this special issue will serve as an opportunity to build a better relationship between doctors and patients all over the world.

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