

Innovation of Junior Doctors in Japan

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A network for junior doctors is about to be launched in Japan for the first time with the support of the Japan Medical Association (JMA). This report describes the outlook of this revolutionary attempt and my feedback after attending the World Medical Association (WMA) Expert Conference on the Revision of the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH).

World Trend Surrounding Junior Doctors

The Junior Doctors Network (JDN) was first established in 2010 with the approval of the WMA, and it has been continuously developing ever since. JDN is the first international organization exclusively intended for junior doctors and has much potential. Through JDN's activities, junior doctors worldwide share their exuberant ideas and energy as well as ample information and experience working with others who share the same vision, which helps junior doctors to mature professionally. Furthermore, I expect that JDN members can collectively propose their ideas, and those ideas and specific issues unique to them could promote the resolution of future issues on global health, thereby contributing to the development of WMA. I should also add that the founding members of JDN include many alumni of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA).

IFMSA—International organization of medical students

IFMSA was established in 1951 mainly by medical students in Europe as an international organization of medical students. WMA as well as various United Nations agencies have officially approved IFMSA as an organization represent-

ing medical students. IFMSA members include medical students from about 100 countries and regions, and its six standing committees (Professional Exchange, Research Exchange, Public Health, Reproductive Health including AIDS, Human Rights & Peace, and Medical Education) manage various projects and workshops around the world. From Japan, the Japan International Medical-ESS Students' Association first joined IFMSA in 1961, and in 2000, it renewed its organization and changed its name to IFMSA-Japan as an organization representing all medical students in Japan. The guiding principle of IFMSA-Japan is to nurture a person of medicine with a wide spectrum of visions. I myself served as the President of IFMSA-Japan in FY2006–2007 and worked at the IFMSA headquarters as the Regional Coordinator for the Asia-Pacific Region in FY2007–2008.

Highly Anticipated Establishment of JMA-JDN

I first learned about the launch of JDN immediately after the WMA General Assembly officially recognized JDN in 2010, when I read the news regarding JDN in an email newsletter to which IFMSA's alumni subscribe. Dr. Xaviour Walker, who was once a member of IFMSA and very active as the president of IFMSA-New Zealand, was serving as the JDN chair at that time. He asked me if there was any organization representing junior doctors in Japan, but none existed in 2010. However, the need for such an organization in Japan was obvious, considering the world trend of globalization already in progress. Since then, two years have passed while the goal of "establishing JDN in Japan" smoldered inside me, but I was swamped with training day after

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Fig. 1 WMA Expert Conference on the Revision of the Declaration of Helsinki

day. I would imagine that there were many other junior doctors who shared the same awareness.

In the winter of 2012, the opportunity came to take action. By the appeal of JMA, I received an invitation from the Japan Primary Care Association to serve as a founding member of JMA-JDN. I took on the role without hesitation. Many of my colleagues who worked together in IFMSA were also invited; the founding members consisted of 21 people from all over Japan. The first activity of JMA-JDN was to attend the WMA Expert Conference on the Revision of the DoH, which was held in Tokyo from February 28 through March 1, 2013.

Challenges for Junior Doctors: Through the experience of attending the WMA Expert Conference on the Revision of the DoH

At the 2013 Tokyo Expert Conference on the Revision of the DoH, representatives of Asian and other nations as well as academia and industries all gathered to listen to the speakers on six themes from Session 1 through 6: Biobanks, Insurance/compensation/protection, Resource poor settings/Post-study arrangements, Vulnerable groups, Ethics committees, and the General comments (Fig. 1). The purpose of this meeting was to gather input mainly from the Asian area in revising the DoH. Attending the meeting for

two days made me realize the difficulty for a junior doctor to participate in an international meeting of medical associations.

There were three main challenges. One was the ignorance and indifference of average junior doctors toward global health issues, including the DoH, as well as healthcare issues in Japan. It proved difficult to fully understand the content of international meetings and to participate in the discussions without such knowledge. In addition to that, another challenge was the language barrier, which stood higher for me in this kind of meeting which involved ethical and abstract issues that were completely different from pure medical content. The third challenge was the fact that junior doctors are not well versed in the situations of other countries or the backgrounds of other industries. As I listened to the discussions and presentations at the meeting, I found that some points were somewhat hard to swallow, probably because I did not fully comprehend the background and context of various standpoints.

I believe these three challenges I experienced deserve further consideration by JMA-JDN, for they could serve as the guidepost when we set goals for our activities.

JMA-JDN—Platform of junior doctors without any boundaries

The 21 founding members of JMA-JDN held



Fig. 2 JMA-JDN members in the lobby of JMA building

Author is the second from the right in the back row.

the first meeting on May 23, 2013 (**Fig. 2**). Currently, we are at the point of team building as we begin our discussion on the future framework of JMA-JDN. Though it is only my opinion, I believe the JMA-JDN should be the platform of junior doctors without any boundaries. The maturing of junior doctors in Japan is pivotal in surmounting the challenges encountered at the Expert Conference on the Revision of the DoH. The platform would provide all junior doctors with a fair chance at their endeavors, and shall not be influenced by an academic society, a specialty, or a person's place of work or residence; the only restriction shall be that the membership is limited to "junior doctors." Ideally, the platform will allow every member to share information and problem awareness by utilizing the resources of the parent organiza-

tion, JDN, so that members are prompted to think and act on their own accord. Such effort will nurture the maturing of junior doctors in Japan and, through collaboration with JMA and IFMSA, will eventually boost up the medical community in Japan.

JMA-JDN is still in its infancy. We are still in the stage of discussing the framework of the organization, including its vision and mission. Nevertheless, I am certain that establishing JMA-JDN will help junior doctors in Japan to mature, and collaborating with JMA and IFMSA will enliven the medical community in the future. I sincerely look forward to exchanging thoughts and amity with other JDN members around the world to enhance and enlighten each other toward higher achievement.