

My thoughts on celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Takemi Program

The Takemi Program of International Health at the Harvard University School of Public Health (HSPH) celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2013. To mark the occasion, two commemorative symposiums were co-hosted by the HSPH and the Japan Medical Association (JMA): one in October 2013 in Boston, USA, and another in November 2013, in Tokyo, Japan.

The Takemi program was born from the strong desire and leadership of Dr. Taro Takemi, a former JMA president who also served as the president of the World Medical Association (WMA). This program aimed to foster future leaders in international public health, both domestically and internationally, for the purpose of establishing and developing better public healthcare, not just in Japan but around the world. The HSPH created courses for this purpose and began to accept international students who were about to graduate with a degree or researchers with equivalent experience. Japan has been sending at least one Takemi fellow each year since 1984. The total number of Japanese fellows has now reached 52, and the program is making firm progress in the 21st century.

In the last 30 years, 242 fellows from 51 countries have been produced from the Takemi Program. Graduates from the Takemi Program have become authoritative figures in international health as valuable resources. Former fellows, who are now actively involved in administration, politics, and academia at national level, form an independent global network of alumni. The program is indeed flourishing.

Because the 30th anniversary of the Takemi Program in Boston also marks the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the HSPH, this commemorative symposium was held as a part of many celebratory events. As the fellows gathered from all over the world were discussing various topics with Professor Michel Reich, the leading professor of the Takemi Program, I witnessed for myself the global human network that the Takemi Program has created. This reassured me of the program's strong sense of direction and goals for the future. I am certain that this 30th anniversary event was not simply an

opportunity to renew old friendships, but also a chance to take a new step into the 31st year of the program.

It has been eight years since I was put in charge of supporting the Takemi Program as the JMA board member. During those years, my duty of ensuring the stable operation of the program has not always been an easy one, in the midst of social upheavals in Japan that emerged in a global context. During the event in Boston, I was awarded the title of "Honorable Takemi Fellow." I feel that this award reflects the gratitude of the HSPH for the activities and historical contributions from the JMA, and that, in accepting this title, I am representing all past and current members of the JMA.

The commemorative symposium that was held in November 2013 in Japan focused on the connection between the global health that the Takemi Program represents and community health. The event was organized as a joint operation between the Takemi fellows and delegates from the community health sector. The symposium's concept is not unique to Japan; in fact, nations across the world are addressing this idea.

The exhibition was also held on the same day; the Toyo Bunko [Oriental Library] that is adjacent to the JMA Building cooperated with us. International exchanges dating from the late 16th century to the present day were outlined for us, and we were also able to follow the modernization of Japanese medicine and the JMA's history. It gave us an opportunity to reconfirm the significance of the Takemi Program and the JMA's international activities. This historical occasion also enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the supporters of the Takemi Program, such as the Japan Pharmaceuticals Manufacturers Association. These events in Tokyo have offered an opportunity to prepare a framework to further strengthen and widely support the foundation of the program, which gives me a great pleasure.

It just so happens that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has recently announced a policy of "international contribution to healthcare" to actively promote the excellent medical system of Japan to the rest of the world. JMA, in tandem with

this movement, is diligently working towards making “international contribution to healthcare” one of its more pressing issues. A challenge such as this requires a global and dynamic effort. I am hopeful that the Takemi Program will serve as a platform for such an international contribution to medicine, and that it will continue to contribute even further in the future.

Through this Takemi Program, I sincerely pray that the objectives of the former JMA pres-

ident, Dr. Taro Takemi, will be succeeded by medical practitioners across the generations. This program will aid in the building of a healthcare system that supports the lives and well-being of many people even in the most difficult times, not only in Japan but in nations across the world.

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