

Since the explosions occurred at the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (NPS) in March, 2011, there continue to be persistent concerns regarding the stabilizing process in not only the regions surrounding the affected area but also around the globe. I am observing this process as a health professional responsible for disaster medicine in the Japan Medical Association, and as a physician operating local health facilities in Iwaki City, Fukushima, approx. 50 km away from the NPS. I believe that the safety level of my living environment is sufficient in terms of the environment, food, and water due to the daily efforts by TEPCO and the decontamination process in the surrounding area. The highway called Joban Expressway will be reopened soon, which passes from Tokyo to Sendai via Iwaki, through an area 10 km away from the NPS. Transportation convenience is gradually returning to the devastated area after four years. A report by the Japan Medical Association Research Institute on detailed government inspections concerning the nuclear disaster and its aftermath are included in this issue.

A report on the infectious threat of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), which spread across borders from three African countries, is also included with the emergency resolutions of the World

Medical Association (WMA). This was another kind of disaster that again terrified the global community, and the WMA immediately responded to this threat as an association of professional physicians of the world. A Japanese company has created a drug that could possibly be effective against EVD, drawing global attention. In the case of urgent demand from affected zones, we believe that access should be given to even unproven treatments as is stated in the WMA Resolution on Unproven Therapy and the Ebola Virus, and the Declaration of Helsinki; however, such drugs must undergo sufficient scientific evaluation.

Thus, with regard to global health issues, we are facing various difficulties and uncertainty. These difficulties will not be resolved without the creation of a common platform for physicians to share precise information and communication in order to make correct decisions and act with collective wisdom.

I believe that humankind can accomplish this, even if it seems to be the hardest task at present, through such processes in the upcoming year.

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