

Insight into the Japan Hospital Association

Interview of Satoru Komatsumoto, IHF Governing Council Member

Dr. Komatsumoto is the vice president of Japan Hospital Association (JHA) since 2017, in charge of “Human Resource Development” and “International Affairs”.

Japan Hospital Association has roughly 2500 members, comprising of both private and public hospitals. Since its foundation in June 1951, it has been actively engaged in promoting “establishment of medical ethics” and the “enhanced quality of hospital medical care” in an effort to promote the improvement and development of hospitals, support the objectives of such, and contribute to better social welfare.



Key challenges for service delivery in Japan

One of the current and urgent topics facing Japanese medical society is the revision of medical workers’ workstyle, notably that of doctors. Japanese doctors have Duty of Responding to Call-up as stipulated in the law, and this is one of factors that prevents doctors from having enough rest.

So-called “2025 issue” is another big challenge. As already known to the world, Japan is one of the fastest aging societies and after 2025 when the baby boomers will all become the age of 75 and above, Japan is expected to see a large increase in social security expenses. Thus, Japanese Government advances “Community-based integrated care systems,” which idea is to support elderly people to have independent life within the community they live in.

Key challenges in healthcare on the international level

On the international level, as a number of foreign visitors to Japan records the highest in its history, it has become very important for hospitals to accommodate ever increasing international patients. Therefore, Japan Hospital Association started providing translation service by telephone in 15 languages for 24hours/7days a week to member hospitals. Also, the pressing issue for Japanese medical scene is to prepare working environment for nurses and caregivers from abroad to work in Japan.

Expectations from and contribution to IHF

Dr. Komatsumoto expects IHF to link between Japan’s and the world hospitals, and JHA to contribute to IHF by providing unique experiences such as those of rapidly aging society.

Healthcare Highlights in Japan

Japan started the Universal Health Coverage in 1961. In Japan, patients have free choice of physician or specialist. Roughly, there are 2 types of health insurances, Employee's health insurance and national health insurance. System governance is largely in the control of the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare and regional governments.

Reimbursement to providers is made in two ways, Medical Point Fee System and Diagnosis Procedure Combination (DPC) System. In Medical Point Fee System, medical procedures are assigned a number of points and the same fee is paid for the same procedure by all insurers to all providers. On the other hand, DPC closely mirrors the DRG system which is inclusive payment.



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japan_in_the_World.svg

About the Japan Hospital Association

Established as the Japan Hospital Association in June 1951, the Japan Hospital Association has conducted its activities by working in conjunction with all employees under the direction of former presidents from Dr. Shusuke Kamijo, the first President, to Dr. Shuzo Yamamoto the tenth President, with the aim of "improving hospitals and fulfilling their mission, as well as contributing to the promotion of social welfare". Throughout this period, the Japan Hospital Association had continually aimed at "establishing medical ethics" and "improving the quality of medical services in hospitals." However, now that 60 years have passed since its establishment, the environment surrounding medical services has largely changed because of a decline in the birthrate, an increase in life expectancy, a change in the disease structure and the so-called "collapse of medical services" and other reasons. In order to respond to such changes and other matters, the Japan Hospital Association has also made some innovative changes. As a result of the reform, the organization structure itself changed into the General Incorporated Association Japan Hospital Association on April 1, 2012. On this occasion, the Japan Hospital Association has newly established the "Code of Ethics" in relation to the "establishment of medical ethics. "Regarding the "improvement of medical services in hospitals," the Japan Hospital Association will continue operations that aim to secure the "quality of medical care" and the "quality of management". Furthermore, the Japan Hospital Association intends to strengthen policy proposals by promoting "visualization".

