

Publication of an English Issue of *the Japanese Journal of Public Health*

We are very glad to declare the start the regular publication of an English issue of the *Japanese Journal of Public Health*, the official journal of Japanese Society of Public Health. This journal celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary in January 2004, at which time it was decided to publish an English issue once a year in November as one of the memorial projects.

The *Japanese Journal of Public Health* has developed together with the economic and industrial activities of Japan in various fields throughout the world. Japan suffered a number of serious industrial and environmental diseases such as urban asthma, Minamata disease and others, but we have now learned to respect the laws of environmental regulation. The rivers in the cities are becoming cleaner with beautiful flowers on their banks, and salmon are coming back to their old home rivers.

Japan ranks first in average life expectancy after live birth, 85 years for women and 78 years for men in 2003, and has the lowest neonatal mortality rate in the world. The total investment in medical and health care is lower in Japan than in other developed countries.

There are, of course, many problems to be resolved, the first being the decreasing birth rate and the imbalance of the population constitution between the young and the elderly. In the near future, one young person will have to support three or four elderly persons. Next, our budget for health, medical care and welfare, including support for the elderly, is limited and might have to be reduced. The health insurance system in Japan is now facing bankruptcy. Moreover, terrorism after September 11, 2001, has affected our community and social system. HIV/AIDS, SARS, the highly pathogenic avian-flu virus, and other emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases must be prevented. Non-communicable diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, cerebrovascular diseases and others have been clarified to be life style-related diseases, and high rate smoking remains an urgent problem in Japan.

As a result, our research interests in public health are varied and complicated, and Japanese researchers are conducting studies to discover ways to establish new and improved policies. Our investigations should be opened to the world so we can exchange ideas among both industrially advanced and less-advanced countries. It is for this reason that we decided to publish an English issue at least once a year. The editors welcome to receive public health papers in all fields by Japanese as well as critical opinions by overseas researchers to develop new concepts for the survival of humankind on planet Earth.

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