

## History and Recent Activities of the Medical Association of Iwate Medical University

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Tomoyuki MASUDA\*<sup>1</sup>

Iwate Medical University was originally founded in 1897 as the Medical School of Iwate Hospital, a private medical institution. After going through many hardships, the school was reorganized as Iwate Medical University in 1947 and has since remained as such. While the shortage of physicians is a problem that has only recently come to make the headlines, the university has long been addressing this issue through its efforts to warn the public of the threat, calling for action, and taking countermeasures. The university has won many competitive research subsidies. A 3-tesla MRI system, one of few such facilities in Japan, was installed in 2000 and has been used with great success in producing scientific achievements and diagnosing patients. A 7-tesla MRI complex, one of few in the world, is planned to be completed by the end of 2010.

At the time the university was established, the physicians working at the university were affiliated with the medical association of Morioka City, where the university is located. They later separated from the Morioka City Medical Association and created an independent organization, the Medical Association of Iwate Medical University, in 2000. A lecture meeting celebrating the 10th anniversary of this association was held in February this year (**Photo 1**). The university medical association was established shortly after the time that many universities in Japan chose to have their own medical associations. It was created as the first workplace-based university medical association in Iwate Prefecture for the purpose of addressing issues specific to a university hospital that the medical university needs to handle. It is on the same organizational level as county and city medical associations, and is

the 16th-oldest medical association among them. Membership numbers 509 persons (as of March 2010), and boasts the top-ranking organization rate of 90% among university medical associations in Japan. In fact, “The Report on the Status Survey concerning the Relationship between Medical Associations and University Medical Faculties and Medical Universities” published by the Japan Medical Association in March 2010 showed that the percentage of university medical association members among the fellows of the prefectural medical association was 19.6% in Iwate Prefecture (as of September 1, 2009), ranking top among the 47 prefectures. It was a great step forward for the Liaison Conference of University Medical Associations in Japan to be organized in 2006 as a subordinate organization of the Japan Medical Association, providing a place for discussing issues specific to university hospitals and advanced treatment hospitals.

Since the time of establishment, the university medical association has been conducting various programs to support the role of the university medical association in delivering advanced medical information to citizens. A very popular event has been the lecture and practice workshop teaching the operation of AED (**Photo 2**), which was coming into widespread use in Japan when the Medical Association of Iwate Medical University was established, and life-saving techniques (**Photo 3**) for use by citizens in daily situations. This event, conducted several times every year, has been attracting many citizens. During the local summer festival, Sansa Dance, medical association members stand at the first-aid station and provide diagnosis and treatment for emergency patients. The association also sends specialist

\*1 Director in charge of General Affairs, Medical Association of Iwate Medical University, Iwate, Japan (tmasuda@iwate-med.ac.jp).



Photo 1 Lecture meeting celebrating the 10th anniversary of the association



Photo 2 Demonstration and teaching of AED at a shopping mall

physicians in various fields who speak as medical professionals at lecture meetings held by city and county medical associations.

The Journal of the Medical Association of Iwate Medical University is issued monthly for information exchange among members. Under the strong leadership of the president, the journal astutely examines the healthcare policy of Japan, problems affecting university hospitals, and other issues. Another important role of the journal is to timely provide information about the activities of the Japan Medical Association and Iwate Prefectural Medical Association to members.

The university medical association is supplying many committee members to nationwide public meetings, the Japan Medical Association, and Iwate Prefectural Medical Association. President Tsutomu Ohori is the chairman of the educational corporation Iwate Medical University and a member of the arbitration committee of the Iwate Prefectural Medical Association. Vice President Akira Ogawa is the president of Iwate Medical University and holds the important post of chairman of the National Conference of Deans of University Medical Faculties and Directors of Hospitals, as well as being the vice president of the Iwate Prefectural Medical Association. He also is a member of the Committee for the Solidarity of Physicians, an organization within the Japan Medical Association. In addition, many members are serving as board and committee members of the Iwate Prefectural Medical Association, contributing to healthcare and welfare in Iwate Prefecture.



Photo 3 Workshop for people from facilities equipped with AEDs

Iwate is a sparsely populated prefecture with a wide geographical area, where the shortage of physicians is considered to be a serious problem as compared with the national average. The Medical Association of Iwate Medical University is cooperating with the Iwate Prefectural Government in promoting the dispatch of physicians so that it may support the universal provision of healthcare to all citizens in the prefecture. This is also the aspiration of Dr. Shunjiro Mita, founder of the Medical School of Iwate Hospital that would go on to develop into Iwate Medical University. Through further collaboration with the Iwate Prefectural Government, the university medical association endeavors to improve its capability to provide advanced healthcare to more patients, thereby contributing to the welfare of citizens in the prefecture.