

– Concept Note –

What should we do to place cancer on the global health agenda?

Sharing information leads to human security

Key words: Human security/ MDGs/ Information Technology

Shenzhen, China, 2010

Organized and sponsored by the Asia Cancer Forum

1. Background and overview

The incidence of infectious diseases in developing countries and the delay in formulating measures to respond to these diseases is recognized as an issue requiring the attention of industrialized nations. Accordingly, infectious diseases are given due recognition on the global health agenda. However, cancer has still to gain the recognition it rightly deserves in the world of global health. This is due to the fact that it is generally viewed as a disease specific to individuals in industrialized nations, which occurs as a result of the individual's approach to personal health management.

Last year, the Fifth Asia Cancer Forum discussed issues relating to cancer and concluded that the highest priority should be for expert groups to share a common recognition of the necessity for cancer to be raised on the global health agenda. In the international community there has also been increasing recognition of the necessity to “begin discussion on placing cancer on the global health agenda,” as evidenced by the Resolution of the United Nations on May 13, 2010 to hold a United Nations General Assembly Summit on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

However, the results of a survey implemented by the Asia Cancer Forum in April 2010, on the occasion of the 101st Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), entitled “Survey on Inclusion of Cancer in the Global Health Agenda,” showed that interest in this issue is not particularly high among a great majority of specialists. Discussion on the inclusion of cancer on the global health agenda does not stop merely at the advocacy of humanitarian principles. In fact, what is

needed now is a move away from the linear debate such as that which has dominated discussions of aid to developing nations in the past, and a move towards more complex projections. Therefore, it is necessary to gain the broad participation of cancer researchers in working to decipher the current challenges faced by industrialized nations, which could then be utilized in assistance to developing nations. In other words, it is necessary to establish a framework for resolving issues that face industrialized nations.

We are now in an era in which developments in health innovation have a significant impact on the direction for global health.

In the initial stages of the genome-wide association study, it was thought that genetic differences by race increased the predisposition to the occurrence of a particular disease. However, as research has advanced it has shown that although there are some statistics differences among races according to genetic background, the genetic factors predisposing a person to the occurrence of disease are clearly shared by all humankind. In other words, any careful observations made in one specific region of the world are relevant to other regions.

Due to the tremendous improvements in genome analysis capabilities it is now possible to analyze genetic information to an incredibly detailed level. Furthermore, IT has enabled quantitative tracking of the vast amounts of medical-related data that are created in the modern world.

By continuously and automatically collecting and gathering information from various sources, including clinical data and medical records, and using this information to realize the creation of a system that would produce the required evidence for the purpose of providing each patient with the most appropriate and latest medical treatment, we would be heading in a direction in which medical treatment and research would join together in a synergetic partnership and providing mutual feedback.

Through such technological breakthroughs we would be able to search out information relating to the culturally diverse acquired lifestyle customs that exist in Asia, even in persons of similar race, and work to reduce risk factors and even help to prevent further epidemics. It is for this reason that rather than basing our research on persons of ethnicities removed from Asia, if we were able to carefully study and understand the fine differences that exist among the races and nationalities of the Asian

region, we would be closer to understanding the nature of diseases in humanity as a whole.

Infectious diseases are characterized by their tendency to infect many people, while the variation in the disease itself is not so great. However, non-communicable diseases, and cancer in particular, have the characteristic of presenting differently from person to person. In other words, we can see that “to understand cancer it is important to look at the differences among individuals.” We have now arrived at the point where we can posit the hypothesis that “in a region with genetic similarities, in which a diversity of acquired lifestyle customs co-exist, would it not be possible to gather significant data through cohort research in the region?”

Progress in science bestows upon people the promise of limitless possibilities and the means to live longer. Humankind has devoted much time and effort in the fight against disease.

In the near future the international community is likely to face an unjust situation in which some people with the same disease will be cured while others will suffer and die. It is this grave reality that we must address.

The Asia Cancer Forum bases its activities on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits equally. In aiming to utilize scientific advancement to address the issue of what we can do to ensure that the challenges that have been faced by industrialized nations are not faced by developing nations, the Asia Cancer Forum is engaging in discussion on the challenge common to both industrialized and developing nations, namely the inclusion of cancer in the global health agenda.

2. Objectives

One of the aims of the meeting will be to discuss how we can ensure a position for cancer treatment on the global health agenda with the ultimate aim of achieving human security for all. To achieve this aim, it is essential that broad-ranging information is collected. In the meeting we will discuss what methods are available to us in our attempts to create a common data system for the rapidly growing Asian region. We will also discuss what preparations can be made to consider and respond to the obstacles to the creation of an Asia-wide data and information network.

3. Expected outcomes

1) Aiming for inclusion of cancer on the global health agenda will provide further clarity for a direction for cancer research.

2) Information collection methods that change with the progress of innovation will become clearer. Continuing to seek out detailed information on cancer will help to form an information asset base for humanity as a whole and help cancer researchers to gain a clear picture of their own role.

3) By analyzing the collected information it will be possible to clarify what factors influence cancer in Asia as opposed to Western countries, or clarify factors influencing cancer among the Asian nations. Clarifying the important influencing factors will help to demonstrate a clear path for the submission of policy proposals, and also encourage the emergence of a common recognition that developments in health innovation are instrumental in boosting the speed of policy proposals and widening their range.

4) The outputs of this meeting are also intended for presentation to the following international bodies:

Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC; the 2010 MDG Review Summit)

World Bank

American Association for Cancer Research (AACR)

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Title: What should we do to place cancer on the global health agenda?
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1	Views from the Asia Pacific Anticancer Therapy and Research Front	12:15
	Hideyuki Akaza(Tokyo Japan akazah@med.rcast.u-tokyo.ac.jp)	
2	Discussion on the possibilities and significance of creating infrastructure for cancer prevention information using school health classes	12:25
	Norie Kawahara (Tokyo Japan norie.kawahara@med.rcast.u-tokyo.ac.jp)	
3	Cancer Pathology Networking in Asia	12:35
	Haruhiko sugimura(Hamamatu Japan hsugimura@hama-med.ac.jp)	
4	Global Network of Childhood Cancers Tumor Banks :Aiming for Better Cure Of the Sick Children	12:45
	Akira Nakagawara (Chiba Japan akiranak@chiba-cc.jp)	
5	Why do we need global collaboration in cancer research ? Establishing cross border fluidity of research materials and information	12:55
	Tohru Masui (Osaka Japan masui@nibio.go.jp)	
6	Global Strategies for Genome and Cell-Based Informatics High Performance DNA Sequencing and Expression Analysis Open a New Area	13:05
	Jun Miyake (Osaka Japan jun_miyake@bpe.es.osaka-u.ac.jp)	
7	Tackling the “Lifestyle related Cancer” with cutting-edge Information Technology Masanori Akiyama, MD, PhD Professor, Policy Alternatives Research Institute The University of Tokyo	
	Discussion Joh Haford (NCI USA) Xian Hao (UICC 2010. APCC2013 President) David Hill (UICC President) Ibrahim Wahid (APCC 2011 President) Julie Schneider, (NIH/NCI)	