

The Japan Medical Association Has Signed the *i*JMAT Agreements in Taiwan—Promoting International Cooperation in Medical Aid Activities in Times of Disaster^{*1}

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Japan Medical Association

Dr. Yoshitake Yokokura, President of the Japan Medical Association (JMA) and Dr. Masami Ishii, at that time Executive Board Member of the JMA visited Taiwan on July 30, 2015, to attend the signing ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and finalized agreements concerning mutual consent on dispatching physicians and assistance systems for medical relief in disaster situations with both the Taiwan Medical Association (TMA)^{*2} and the Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps (TRMPC,^{*3} a Taiwanese non-governmental organization providing international medical assistance), respectively.

In the opening remarks, Dr. Yokokura expressed his gratitude for the numerous donations from Taiwan for the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, and explained that the JMA was asking its members across Japan for donations for the many burn victims of the accidental dust explosion at a water park in New Taipei City, Taiwan, on June 27, 2015.

At the ceremony, which had numerous attendees including representatives from the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East Asia Relations Commission (a liaison agency for Taiwan-Japan affairs in Taiwan) as well as members of the Legislative Yuan, Dr. Yokokura, Dr. Ching-Chuan Su, President of the TMA, and Dr. Chi-Chun Liu, President of the TRMPC each signed the relevant agreements. The ceremony was covered by several major media outlets from both Japan and Taiwan, including the Japan Broadcasting Cor-



Dr. Yokokura (JMA) and Dr. Su (TMA)



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poration (NHK).

The agreements aim to promote international cooperation regarding medical aid activities in times of disaster at the civilian level based on the concept of *i*JMAT.^{*4} It will guarantee Japanese and Taiwanese physicians' license in

^{*1} This is an English-translated version of an article printed in the JMA News No. 1296 (September 5, 2015 Issue).

^{*2} Taiwan Medical Association. http://www.tma.tw/EN_tma/president.asp.

^{*3} Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps. <http://www.taiwanroot.org/about.php?l=en&id=5>.

^{*4} *i*JMAT: international Japan Medical Association Team.

both nations and enable these physicians to lawfully participate in medical activities with physicians from disaster-stricken countries and under the supervision of leading local physicians, so they can strive to save disaster victims.

In Japan, foreign physician must pass the National Medical Practitioners Qualifying Examination and become licensed to practice medicine in accordance with Articles 2 and 7 of the Medical Practitioner's Act. In the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan indicated that providing a minimal level of medical practice for disaster victims in times of unanticipated emergency situations can be regarded as an act of legitimate professional duty under the penal code and therefore the illegality involved in such act should be considered annulled; however, only 4 nations—Israel, Jordan, Thailand, and the Philippines—were approved even though over 30 nations, including Taiwan, offered help.

After the signing ceremony, Dr. Ishii emphasized the significance of signing the agreements to the press, stating “The conclusion of the agreements today will enable medical assistance between our 2 nations in events of disaster.” He also shared his view that “Disaster relief will change to the ‘demand-based type,’ in which

additional assistance will be considered upon receiving requests from local parties involved, from the previous ‘push-type’ that can put a burden on the receiving nation.”

As Dr. Yokokura mentioned at the ceremony, the JMA offered medical assistance to the burn victims of the dust explosion, prior to the conclusion of the agreements. On July 2, Dr. Shigeru Suganami, President of the AMDA (The Association of Medical Doctors of Asia, a certified non-profit organization) and Dr. Yoshito Ujiie, Chair of the Japanese Society of Intensive Care Medicine (JSICM) visited Taiwan as an advance delegation party, and reported that “There are many patients in highly severe conditions” and that “They require the expert assistance from Japan in order to utilize the artificial skins and medical supplies donated from Japan.” After receiving requests for assistance from the TMA and the TRMPC, the JMA dispatched 6 burn experts recommended by the 3 relevant medical societies (JSICM, the Japan Association for Acute Medicine, and the Japanese Society for Burn Injuries) as the “Joint Burn Care Assistance Team of Physicians by JMA and Three Medical Societies,” and provided medical support in Taiwan from July 12 to 15, 2015.