With the advent of the 21st century, the health care system in Japan has now reached a point where drastic change is required. Various renovations of the health care system have been proposed reflecting the citizens’ demands for better health care, issues concerning patient safety, problems concerning the roles of hospitals, the policy of health care containment, and the asserted need for the advanced clinical training program. Important issues that need to be addressed in the field of pediatric health care include the response to the decreasing number of children, the construction of a system for providing pediatric health care including emergency care for children, the understanding and treatment of child psychiatric problems, and the campaigns to protect children from mass media, accidents, etc., as well as the involvement of pediatricians in infant and preschool services to facilitate early intervention aiming at the sound upbringing of children. Although there is an acute shortage of pediatricians, it has been emphasized that the problem lies in manpower available rather than in the nominal number of pediatricians. At present, about 35% of all pediatricians in Japan are women, and the percentage is more than 50% among younger pediatricians. Improvement of the environment supporting the working of female pediatricians is an important factor in constructing the system for providing pediatric health care including emergency care for children.

The provision of pediatric training in the advanced clinical training program is an important means to develop good pediatricians. At present, pediatric training is given as a compulsory subject for a period of 1 to 3 months. Amending the program so that 3-month training will be given as a basic subject, like internal medicine, surgery, etc. is absolutely essential. It is important to promote the concept that the responsibility of fostering children is shared not only by pediatricians, but also by all physicians. Renovation of the system for certifying specialist pediatricians is required for the improvement of the quality of specialist pediatricians, and efforts are being made toward such renovation. To support the renovation of pediatric health care in Japan according to the global standard, we have been promoting the exchange of opinions and educational campaigns concerning pediatric education and practice in the U.S., Asia, and Europe.

The population of children at the age of 15 or less in Japan has decreased to 13.8% of the national population, and further decreases are anticipated. The sound nurturing of gifted children has become all the more important in this situation. We are now faced with several problems concerning health care and the welfare of children. To build a system to save the lives of children, the Japan Pediatric Society has been making efforts to develop a proposed network of pediatric health care including emergency care for children for several years. The Japan Pediatric Society, the Japanese Society of Child Health, and the Japan Pediatric Association are also working in close cooperation aiming at the enactment of the Child Health Care Law, which would help solve the various problems related to the health care and welfare of children, such as immunization policies, training of pediatricians, and payment of medical costs, as well as the sound growth of children in Japan.

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