

The ideal aged society in the future

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Japan had achieved the longest life expectancy in the world in a short period. Since the similar situation is now rapidly developing in Taiwan, it will be of interest to all colleagues.

The creation of the ideal aged society is the biggest task of mankind, never experienced before.

The aged society should be much brighter and more active, than many people now imagine. The handicapped or care-necessary is now only 20% of the total elderly and aged population older than 65 years. That means 4 times of those are healthy and active. If this active energy is organized toward the creation of the aged society, the future will be more hopeful. Now we are proposing the definition of “aged” as 75 years and older from many medical and social reasons. If so, the rate of the “population aging” will be 10%. One can imagine that Japan is a young country.

From my experiences such as elucidation of SMON(Subacute Myelo-Optico-Neuropathy) and HAM(HTLV-I Associated Myelopathy), I am confident that any geriatric diseases must be have causes, which will be elucidated in near future. For example, Alzheimer disease was estimated to become controlled in several years, according to my inquiries to the gerontologists in Japan in 2001.

In Japan the new national center of geriatrics and gerontology was inaugurated in 2004 in Nagoya, to the establishment of which I was deeply engaged. It is now contributing a lot to the creation of the aged society in medical and social aspects.

In 2000, the new long term care insurance system was introduced, in which I was also deeply engaged as the chief of the governmental council in charge. This system has many advantages compared with those of western countries. The financial system (public fund 50% and the rest by premium), “support of the independent life, instead of handicapped-relief” as a slogan, the preventive services, the care management, the computer aided decision of the grade of necessary care etc are its merits.

For the creation of the aged society, the health promotion is indispensable. For the long life, the living custom or the life style play the much more important role than the hereditary factors. The name of the

geriatric disease was replaced to the “life-style related diseases”. The “healthy life expectancy” proposed by WHO should be more evaluated than the life expectancy. To the ideal aged society, how to die in peace is also very important. As the president of Japan society for dying with dignity, we have been engaged in the enlightenment of life and death. Viewing the situation on the terminal care, we are petitioning the parliament for the legalization of death with dignity, which are approved in many other advanced countries.

As human is fatal, how to die is the eternal subject in the ideal aged society. Needless to say, “death with dignity or natural death” differs from euthanasia, which is legally approved only in some countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Oregon in USA etc. To die in peace will be a key-word to the ideal aged society.

As the conclusion, the happy future of the aged society can be realized through our efforts. To live longer in health and to die in peace will be mile-stones for the ideal aged society.