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Shimizu, Shuji
Kyushu University Hospital

Nakashima, Naoki
Kyushu University Hospital

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1. Preface

The National University Hospital Council of Japan started its internationalization project and organized the first general meeting last October with delegates from 44 national university hospitals throughout Japan. Each hospital appointed its own engineer to support the full range of local telemedicine activities. This meeting was a very big step forward in accelerating the expansion of remote medical education to the rest of the world.

Again this year, many new members joined our project, and a variety of new programs were organized in multiple fields. Prior to 2010, the Digital Video Transport System (DVTS) was the only satisfactory system for transmitting high quality medical moving images. The introduction of the HD-H323 and Vidyo systems opened a new era for telemedicine. Although research and education networks (RENs) are still limited to university hospitals and major institutions, those who are not connected to them can also receive satisfactory video resolution through regular commercial networks. This opened the door for many other hospitals. Streaming technology, which can send one-way transmissions similar to television broadcasts, provided valuable opportunities for much smaller hospitals to access various educational programs with ease. In terms of global RENs, CAREN began service in Central Asia, and RENs are expanding throughout Latin America thanks to the upcoming FIFA World Cup and Olympics in Brazil. Increasing numbers of new collaborations are very much expected.

Surgery and endoscopy remain the major fields in our project, but we also had some new programs. Live ENT (ear-nose-throat) surgery was broadcast from Seattle to three national universities in Japan in August, and the first dental teleconference was successfully held in January between hospitals in Japan and Indonesia. Neurology was another new field for us, and many other exciting events are planned for the future. As we now encounter few network problems thanks to rapid technological advancement, more focus should be placed on making attractive and educational programs to fulfill the needs of the medical community.

The 7th Asia Telemedicine Symposium was held in Bangkok, Thailand. This was the first time the symposium was held outside Japan or Korea. The main targets of this symposium were the local engineers who support our telemedicine activities behind the scenes and work remotely for international collaborations. The symposium was one of the few occasions for them to meet face-to-face with other members to exchange new information and deepen their relationships. We all deeply appreciate their technical expertise and continuous support.

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Kyushu University Hospital
Shuji Shimizu, MD. PhD

