

The Prospectus for Founding the Association for the Verification of Inhuman Conduct by Japanese Researchers and Health Care Professionals during the War

Because of recent remarkable progress in medical science and patient care, human beings face new ethical problems. Medical researchers and health care professionals are obliged to tackle those problems as their own. It is essential to the success of this enterprise to look back and reflect seriously on the recent past. In the particular case of Japan, it is essential for Japanese themselves to investigate and to try to learn important lessons from the participation of the Japanese Association of Medical Sciences (JAMS)/the Japan Medical Association (JMA) in the 15 Years' War and Unit 731 including the inhuman conduct at the front during the war, such as human experimentation, vivisection, the practice of operating on living human bodies and the case of the vivisection of 8 POWs at Kyushu Imperial University School of Medicine etc.

However, the whole picture of these problems is not yet clear and the verification of the facts is not easy because of the destruction and dispersal of contemporaneous documents and the "secrecy" and "concealment" of remaining ones. As for Unit 731, in order to acquire its research results, GHQ, which occupied Japan after the defeat of Japan, questioned many medical researchers and health professionals involved in the Unit on the understanding that GHQ would not to raise the issue of their war crimes. Under these circumstances, the truth of the Unit 731 issue has been treated among the circles of JMA/JAMS as "obscure" or the issue itself as "resolved" or "taboo." In 1951, on its accession to the World Medical Association, the JMA, representing Japanese doctors, issued the statement that "as the representative institution of Japanese doctors, JMA, on this occasion, reprimands the violence inflicted upon the people of the enemy countries, and condemns the alleged and in a few cases actually performed cruelties on patients," (*The Journal of the Japan Medical Association*, vol. 26, p. 71, 1951) and has since treated the issue as resolved. But this statement did not point towards a future for Japanese medical sciences and health care based on the eradication of racism and the protection of human rights, which could have resulted from a serious reflection on the past inhuman conduct by Japanese researchers and health care professionals.

Thus, Japan entered the 21st century without having made serious efforts to confront the inhuman, wartime conduct committed by the Japanese medical profession and to make the best use of the lessons that could have been learned. We must draw from the historical lesson that "Those who close their eyes to the past become blind to the present." (Richard von Weizsäcker 1985). Consequently, it is essential for the establishment of medical ethics and the true progress of medical care and sciences in Japan to reveal and further verify the historical facts concerning the atrocities

committed by the Japanese medical profession during the war. In this regard, it is vital for JMA/JAMS, which represent Japanese medical circles, and for involved academic associations and universities to tackle the issue as their own.

The Executive Committee of the War and Medicine exhibition at the 27th General Assembly of the Japan Medical Congress (2007) asked the Congress that a verification of the historical facts be undertaken as an official project of the General Assembly, but that request was not approved. Instead, the Congress only permitted a small exhibition booth for a standard fee. Consequently, the Executive Committee implemented a small exhibition on its own a “War and Medicine” panel exhibition at the assigned exhibition booth, and held an international symposium at another venue. Based on these achievements, we will make a great effort to carry on the activities necessary for the further verification of the historical facts with a view towards the 28th General Assembly of the Japan Medical Congress (Spring of 2011, Tokyo) among other activities.

After the 60 years since the end of the war, it is becoming more difficult to collect the testimony of the relevant survivors and documents from that era. We must, therefore, speed up our efforts for the verification. Furthermore, vital for an objective verification on the basis of historical facts is the cooperation of not just medical researchers and doctors but also co-medicals, such as nurses, and historians, bioethicists and lawyers as well as others.

Although the verification of the deeds done during in the war needs to be carried out by all levels of civil society, it is important that medical circles, more than anyone else, carry out seriously their share of the verification and inform the nation of the results because the attitude of medical scientists and doctors can directly affect human lives. In addition, for the successful verification by all levels of the nation to occur, an educational campaign, including mass media, and aimed towards the nation, is also needed.

We found this association in order to carry out the activities as explained above in the prospectus. We hope from the bottom of our hearts that the activities of this Association for the Verification of Inhuman Conduct by Japanese Researchers and Health Care Professionals during the War will contribute to: 1) the development of the medical sciences and health care based on human rights and dignity; 2) the improvement of medical ethics; and 3) the eventual realization of a warless and peaceful society in Japan.

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Inaugural Meeting of the Association for the Verification of Inhuman Conduct by Japanese Researchers and Health Care Professionals during the War