The future dentistry in Japan

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In 1907, The Nippon Dental University as private school was established as the first dental school certified by the government in Asian countries. Establishing first national school was 21 years later than private’s. 29 dental schools are in present Japan. 17 schools are private and other is national and prefectural. There are about 100,000 dentists in Japan at present. The number of inhabitant is 125,000,000, so there is one dentist for 1,250 people. 70,000 dentists are in private practice. Total 90,000 dentists are working. DMFT in 12-year old's was 5.4 in 1970 and 1.4 in 2011. Edentulous rate in 65 to 69 and over 80 years old were 35 and 65% in 1970, 5 and 40% in 2011. Proportion of person age 80 with 20 and more permanent teeth was 16% in 1992 and 40% in 2011. These data will show that Japanese oral health is improving so rapidly dental education is correct.

On the other hand, there are people like Japan Dental Association which insists that the number of dentists should be reduced. Because the expectation is that the Japanese population will keep decreasing and will be 86,000,000 in 2100, but the number of dentists doesn’t change. The premise for this insistence is that the contents of dental health care will not be changed in the future.

However following point of the view of future dentistry, I’m considering to the number of dentists should still be not reduced. Two examples of future dentistry are shown below.

First is support of eating not only in elderlies but also in other young generation. Dentists can support the happiness of eating all through entire life. A decline of the body function by the aging also reduces the eating and swallowing functions. The dysphagia is often involved for a demented and post stroke patients. Oral health care and dysphagia rehabilitation prevent aspiration pneumonia.

The infant in a growth process does not obtain eating and swallowing functions sufficiently, is often observed Malnutrition obstructs growth and development. Dentists must be one of the members of the support team for the patient with dysphasia.

The other is the applicability to the regenerative medicine using the cells of human tooth. For instance stem cells from tooth pulp can differentiate into liver cell is useful for treatment of cirrhosis. It was shown by an animal experiment already.

These two examples indicate a possibility that the education of the dentistry can be contributed to the human health in the future.

The education for the future dentistry has just started in Japan.

Dr. Akira Hamura (DDS, PhD) gained Japanese dental license in 1979, and received his degree of dentistry from the Nippon Dental University, Tokyo, Japan in 1983. From 2003 to 2012 he was professor of General Dentistry in Hospital of the Nippon Dental University, and from 2013 professor of department of Geriatric Dentistry NDU. He is also the Dean of the School of Life Dentistry NDU at Tokyo.

Dr. Hamura has worked mainly in clinical and educational field. He was a person responsible for dental clinical education as president of NDU hospital from 2008 to 2012. In clinical dental education his areas of special interest include attitude, behavior, communication and habit of dental students. He and his colleague have developed new patient robot simulation system "SIMROID" since 2004.

Dr. Hamura received the award of advanced education system development by "SIMROID" from Japanese dental education association in 2011.