Transforming Super Ageing Issues into Opportunities

Population ageing will continue to rapidly progress throughout the world over the next half century. In order to accommodate the dramatic changes that ageing brings about in societies, new ideas need to be developed and shared through cooperation at the global level. An international conference on this issue was held in Japan in October, and attended by leading figures in government, industry, and academia from around the world. The conference generated numerous proposals and recommendations for realizing a more active society.

Keynote Speech (1): Toward a Super Active Ageing Society

Atsushi Seki, President, Promotion and Medical Affairs Corporation for Private Elders of Japan

Japan is the first country in the world to have a super ageing society. Elderly people in Japan have a strong desire to participate in the workforce. Prolonging the longevity of workers, consumers, investors and participants in the local community while extending healthy longevity in general will create a super ageing society with considerable vitality.

Theme Lecture 1:
For Healthy Longevity

Yoshikage Yokoyama
President, Japan Medical Association

As the population ages, the burden on the social insurance system will increase. Reining in medical and welfare spending, however, is not likely to be accepted by the general public. The Japan Medical Association recommends a generational social insurance system with a good balance between self-help, mutual assistance and public support.

Panel Session: Health

Keynote Speech (2): Dementia Ecosystem Development to Encourage Social Innovation

Hajiro Naito, Representative Corporate Officer and CEO of Saz Co., Ltd.

Legislative measures encompass various issues related to dementia in Japan. Eisai provides a data platform rooted in trust between the people living with dementia and the company, and is working to build a dementia ‘ecosystem’ in which industry, government, academia and the public will cooperate to address those issues.

Keynote Speech (3): "Creating Living in Your Own Way" in a 100-Year Life

Masatoshi Koida, President and Representative Director, AstraZeneca, Ltd.

As an insurance company with "creating living in your own way" as its brand promise, Aflac intends to develop products and services that meet the needs associated with longer life expectancy for people with cancer and with the risks related to longer lives.

Theme Lecture 2:
The impact of demographic change on labor supply and economic growth: Can APEC meet the challenges ahead?

John Pigott, Director of the APEC Centre of Excellence on Population Ageing Research (CEPAR) and Adjunct Professor of Economics at the University of New South Wales

Viewed from the 3P model of population, participation and productivity, global growth will slow going forward. To solve this, it will be important to welcome immigrants for population and productivity, and elderly people and women for participation.

Panel Session: Employment / Social Participation
Shimizu: Having a purpose in life leads to healthy longevity. Employment and participation in society are two of the keys to feeling fulfilled in life. It is important that activities be conducted with coordination between private-sector companies, the local government and volunteers in the local community. Akiyama: When people are living to the age of 100, post-retirement is not the remainder of one’s life; it is more like a second life. Employment is the No. 1 wish of senior citizens. Government, academia and industry need to work together to create a society that enables people to work their entire lives if they wish and that is inclusive of the elderly, women, people with disabilities and people with diseases.

Kikukawa: Daiza House introduced an age 65 retirement program in 2013, and it is used by over 70% of eligible employees. What is important is that there be a way to take the person’s role into account in their evaluation and ensure the person is assigned to a workplace where they can effectively demonstrate their abilities.

Kuroda: Ageing and declining birthrates have progressed more in Kanagawa Prefecture than any other prefecture. We need to focus on disseminating the concept of “ME-BYDO” which regards health and disease as continuous. It emphasizes the importance of bringing a person’s physical and mental condition closer to the healthier state in daily life, with both the community and the workplace playing important roles. I would like to transform the elderly from those who need support to those who give support.

Keynote Speech (4): Improving Quality of Life of the Elderly with AI

IBM is developing an “AI suitcase” capable of monitoring a person’s surroundings and effectively guiding them like an indoor seeing-eye dog. In addition, in the future, it will likely be possible to utilize ultra-compact AI sensors to evaluate cognitive function through daily behavior patterns.

Theme Lecture (5): Cognitive Aging and Financial Gerontology

As the population continues to age and cases of dementia increase, it is becoming a problem even for financial institutions. There is an urgent need to address problems associated with diminished judgment by revising rules for contracts, introducing guardianship and developing financial services for the elderly.

Panel Session: Financial Gerontology

Ishizaki: Financial institutions are developing initiatives for elderly clients, including simplified financial products. The Japan Financial Gerontology Institute was established in April of this year, and we intend to continue to address problems associated with ageing by Japanese society as a whole.

Special Lecture: Global Roadmap for Healthy Longevity

The National Academy of Medicine is beginning the grand challenge of healthy longevity. We will hold workshops for studying best practices from around the world and also hold a global competition that will reward breakthrough innovation.

Summary Session: To the future

Noritake: Today’s discussion has brought up many important points. We have covered extending healthy longevity, working life expectancy, women’s empowerment, societal participation, expanding the range of regional case studies, diverse policy coordination and change, the importance of policy coordination internationally, the development of an ecosystem, and more.

Nakamura: Various active ageing initiatives are being conducted by government, academia and industry. As a leader in this area, Japan intends to broadly share its experience with other countries and work in a mutually beneficial way to address issues associated with ageing.

Sawai: There are real prospects for solutions to cancer and heart disease. What remains is combating dementia. It is my feeling that to bring about a vital ageing society it will be important to develop an ecosystem for overcoming dementia.

Nguyen: I strongly feel the need for comprehensive measures. In Vietnam, we have made progress with medical legislation since 2010. We hope to address the issues associated with ageing as well, with support from Japan.

Kaneko: Actions need to be taken before there is an impact. In the globalizing world, all issues and all solutions are shared. The same is true of ageing and its issues. Actions should be taken with all countries, religions and individuals cooperating.

Kurokawa: In Japan, the elderly population makes up 27% of the total population. The issues of ageing are personally relevant. In the discussions today, one of the key words was “community.” Attempts to address these issues without relying on the government will also be of use to other countries as a reference.

Fried (video message): Achieving healthy longevity creates many opportunities. When social infrastructure supports the engagement of older adults, it becomes an important resource for society. Key is promoting health across the lifespan, so that societies can enjoy and benefit from the talents of older generations.