



The Second IMIA Japan Chapter International Symposium

Tokyo, Japan on October 9, 2015

The Japan Chapter of the International Medical Interpreting Association held its annual International Symposium in Tokyo on December 9, 2015 at the Parliamentary Museum of the Office of the House of Representatives.

Over 200 IMIA members from Japan and China as well as stakeholders attended the symposium which was a combination of Boot Camps, lectures, panel discussions and networking opportunities. The President of the Board of Directors of the IMIA traveled from the state of Rhode Island in the US to attend the Symposium and deliver the keynote address.

In the morning session of the Symposium, two boot camps were conducted: Basic Training in Mandarin with simultaneous interpreting into Japanese; and Advanced Training in English for candidates who already have been working in medical settings. Ms. Yoshie Ng led the boot camp in Mandarin. She is a CMI in Mandarin and Cantonese, an interpreter at Tufts Medical Center, Former IMIA Boston director, and Professional Trainer for Boston University's training course. The boot camp in English was led by Ms. Gi Eun OH. A CMI in Korean, Ms. OH is Korean Chapter Chair, founder of Gieun Oh's Medical Interpreting Training Center, and a visiting assistant professor of Yonsei University's Wonju College of Medicine.

The afternoon session opened with welcome and remarks by Dr. Kazumi Takesako, organizer and Chair of the IMIA Japan Chapter, and Dr. T. Sakamaki, Co-organizer, IMIA Japan Chapter Medical Advisor and Vice President of the Japan Telemedicine and Telecare Association.

Dr. Lin Zhang, IMIA Chair of the Beijing Chapter, introduced the Keynote Speaker, Juana Horton. Dr. Zhang is a clinical pathologist at the Peking Union Medical College Hospital.

The president of the IMIA Board of Directors, Juana Horton, delivered the keynote address. She is president and CEO of Horton Interpreting Services, Inc., the largest

provider of medical interpreting services and other interpreting and translation services in Rhode Island and southern New England. Ms. Horton brought into sharp focus the rapid growth of interpreting as a profession in the U.S. She cited the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projection of a 46 percent employment growth by the year 2022 for interpreters and translators in the U.S., which is much faster than the average growth for all occupations. She reported increased recognition of the strategic importance of the role of medical interpreters and their certification.

Ms. Horton said: "The IMIA has worked with Canada, Germany, Russia, Israel, and many other countries to advance professional medical interpreting and address the issues of meaningful healthcare access for the linguistic minorities. We would be delighted to work with you in Japan to develop the strategy for establishing national certification for professional medical interpreters, and to help you develop the Code and Standards, the training of students and the training of the trainers, and the procedures and protocols that are necessities for a high quality national certification program."

Ms. Julia P. Fortier gave a lecture on the findings of a survey of 491 foreign patients in Japan. She is the executive director of DiversityRx, a website, and co-produces the DiversityRx Conference Series on Quality Health Care for Culturally Diverse Populations. She is also active in immigrant health practice and policy dialogues through the European Union, the World Health Organization, and the International Organization for Migration.

Dr. Kenichi Uemura, Professor Emeritus at the Hamamatsu University School of Medicine, gave an insightful and provocative lecture entitled "How We Can Effectively Improve Our Language Skills from a Viewpoint of Brain Functions". Dr. Uemura asserted that English education in Japan has been a failure. He showed how different locations in the brain house different languages. These areas are strengthened by extensive listening practice. Therefore, Dr. Uemura asserts, "Grammatical literal translation should be replaced by free translation into comfortable English."

A panel discussion was then held on "Challenges for LJP's residents and the deaf to access to health care". The Chair was Mr. Kiyomi Takizawa, IT Advisor of the IMIA Japan Chapter. Mr. Takizawa is Representative, Director, and President of C&T Co., Ltd.; Guest Professor of Fujita Health University; Executive Director of the Network Association of Diagnostic Information; and Guest Lecturer of Gunma University.

Panelists were:

- Peggy Prosser: Ms. Prosser is an international expert in sign language in diverse languages and cultural backgrounds. She is the co-founder of the International Deaf Development Organization.
- Katsunobu Takenaka, MD: Dr. Takenaka is Vice President of the Japanese Red Cross Takayama Hospital and Chairman of Neurosurgery, Radiology and Pharmacy.
- Kouji Terashima: Mr. Terashima is a sign language interpreter, IMIA Japan Chapter Sign language interpreting committee leader.
- NumYun Kim: Ms. Kim is Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of the Nagoya International Center for Deaf and Dumb Persons.
- Mr. Yamamoto is Director of the International Relations Division of the Citizens and Cultural Affairs Department of the Nagano Prefecture.

The final speaker was Dr. Kazuyuki Hamada, member of the House of Councilors (and member of its Committee on Diplomacy and Defense); founder of the Research Institute for Future Technologies; and author and media commentator on international affairs. Dr. Hamada spoke on his “proposal aimed to provide medical interpreting services to LJP’s and the deaf in Japan”. Dr. Hamada recognized the strategic importance of high quality medical interpreting for LJP’s and the deaf in Japan, and he is an advocate for trained, certified medical interpreters.

The symposium was capped by the Advocacy Awards Ceremony, for which there were two recipients:

Dr. Takeshi Ida is Advisor for Kohka Public Hospital, Councilor of the Japanese Society of Travel and Health; Director of the Japan Association of Medical Interpreters;

Representative of the Shiga Multilingual Medical Network Council; Honorary Member of the Kinki Surgical Association; Former Chair of the Shiga Association of Surgeons; and former Representative of the Biwako Forum for International Medical Service.

Dr. Setsuko Lee is Professor Graduate School of Human Health Science, University of Nagasaki, Siebold, a director of the Research Center of Japan Global Health; member of the board of Services for Health in Asian and African Regions; member of the board of the Health and Development Service; a councilor of a public interest in the foundation: Nagasaki International Association.

It is immediately evident from the caliber of participants in the IMIA Japan Chapter Symposium that the content and quality of the presentations and panel discussions was of the highest value. The insights and perspectives shared in these presentations and discussions were truly exceptional. The superiority of this content and quality portends a promising future for the medical interpreting profession in Japan.

There is one more aspect of the IMIA Japan Chapter's International Symposium which is of equal importance to the quality and content of its presentations and discussions. It is a component that manifested itself in the networking party for IMIA members and guests after the symposium. This third component is *esprit*. Association networking events can be dull affairs. But the enthusiasm and dynamism of the interaction between IMIA's Japan Chapter's members and guests was palpable and truly exceptional.

Starting with Kazumi Takesako's boundless energy and attention to detail in organizing this symposium with all its complexity, her enthusiasm and dedication was shared by all the members of the Symposium Committee who volunteered their time and effort to make the symposium a singular success.

"I was tremendously impressed with the energy and dedication of everyone involved with the Symposium, and also the exceptional *esprit* and spontaneous camaraderie they showed at the networking gathering," said Juana Horton, President of the Board of Directors of the IMIA. "I want to thank Kazumi and all the members of the IMIA's Japan Chapter for putting on such an exemplary program," she said. "They are an inspiration to all of us in the profession of medical interpreting."