THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

When I first arrived in Japan from the United States, almost 40 years ago, people would ask me what kind of work I did. I would tell them that I am a physical therapist. “What is that? Aren’t you an English teacher?” Then I would tell them that I worked in the field of rehabilitation. Again, I would be asked, “What is that?” Even though physical therapy was a well-known profession in the West, it was a very new field in Japan. Even the so-called “rehabilitation centers” in Japan did not resemble the rehabilitation centers in the West. They did not provide the patients with any kind of therapy, nor did they try to renovate the patients’ homes to give them a chance to return there to live their lives as they wished. These centers just provided the patients with a bed and a little space to live out the rest of their lives. They were very gloomy and sad places.

The students in the new professional schools set up to train therapists knew very little about the professions they would be entering, and most of the teachers were brought here from America, England, and Australia. Of course, none of the teachers spoke Japanese, so the students had to learn in English. They were taught all the basic professional knowledge and techniques before being sent off to the few hospitals (both Japanese hospitals and American Army base hospitals) that could provide clinical training. When they finished their three-year course, they took the national license examination and went off to work in hospitals all over Japan. No research was taught, and no research was done. There was no training provided for that, and there was no time while treating patients to do any research. Therefore, therapists just did what they had been taught to do and used their clinical experience to improve their treatment programs and knowledge.

The educational system has advanced quite a bit since then, and our university has developed from a junior college to a small four-year college to a full university. And research is included in the curriculum. Research is also done in the clinical settings and is highly valued.

Moreover, as you can see in this issue of "Humanity and Science", research has become an important part of the rehabilitation field in general. This is the age of "evidence based medicine", and we must prove that our treatments are effective and valid through research. The articles published in this journal are based on well planned and diligently carried out studies. Included in this issue are special contributions, general articles, original articles, clinical studies, and various reports. They are a tribute to the development and advancement of rehabilitation both here in Japan and around the world.

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