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Medical  
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OCTOBER 2021

# Health Care Dialogue between Japan and Viet Nam

Summary report



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**Organized by:**

Medical Excellence JAPAN (MEJ)

Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

**Supported by:**

Viet Nam: Ministry of Health

Japan: Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

**Date:** 27 October, Wednesday, 2021

**Time:** 3:30 PM to 5 PM (Hanoi time) / 5:30 PM to 7 PM (Tokyo time)

**Format:** Zoom Webinar

**Participants:**

280 participants at the time of the event (380 people registered)

- experts in the Vietnamese medical, health, and related sectors
- people who are interested in the medical and healthcare collaboration between Viet Nam and Japan, including health professionals, academia, health industries, and ministries

**Program:**

‘Further Collaboration in Healthcare Sector between Viet Nam and Japan’

**Opening remarks:**

Dr Minoru Akiyama, Executive Director of Medical Excellence JAPAN

Dr Akiyama began by expressing his gratitude for the organization of this meeting and gave an overview of Medical Excellence Japan: a general incorporated association established as a central organizational hub to fill the gap between industry-academia-government in the medical and healthcare field and promote international collaboration. Then he mentioned that the purpose of this meeting is to identify medium- and long-term issues in the healthcare field that Japan and Viet Nam can jointly address in the future and to discuss the establishment of a system of cooperation that will lead to solutions to these issues through collaboration among industry, academia, and medical institutions, in addition to intergovernmental cooperation.

Dr Akiyama concluded by expressing his strong expectation that Medical Excellence Viet Nam would be established soon in order to contribute to global health through collaboration with MEJ.

**Keynote addresses:**

1. For the Future, the Role of Viet Nam and Japan in the Western Pacific Region:  
Dr Takeshi Kasai (WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific)

Dr Kasai gave three reasons for establishing a new platform between Japan and Viet Nam: 1) share their experiences and existing technologies to solve health-related challenges, 2) create solutions to new challenges from ongoing new projects such as the super-aging society, and 3) those solutions in both countries would lead to solving future challenges in the neighboring region.

Dr Kasai stated that Viet Nam was the only country that actively supported Japan at the time of Japan's participation in WHO in 1951, emphasizing that thereafter Japan has played an active role in assisting Viet Nam, and now Japan and Viet Nam are true partners in learning from each other and cooperating to address healthcare challenges in both countries. He noted that both countries are trying to build a platform to gather the wisdom and excellence of industry, government, academia, and medical professionals, which is expected to bring spillover effects in both countries and the entire Asian region.

2. Health Development in Viet Nam:  
Dr Nguyen Trưởng Sơn, Vice Minister of Ministry of Health, Viet Nam

VM Dr Son thanked Japan's support to Viet Nam for COVID-19 prevention and control as well as Japan's cooperation in the Vietnamese health sector. Dr Son presented the current status of the health sector of Viet Nam: Reform of the health system to meet the needs of the people, expansion of the health care network, improvement of the quality of health services supported by high technology, increase in life expectancy, and increase in the number of doctors per population.

He also mentioned several challenges they have been facing, including: equity between different regions and population growth, overcrowding in big and high-level hospitals, inability of the health system to address population growth, and health system resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr Son explained the specific orientation of Viet Nam's health system for the coming year: to achieve equity, efficiency, and quality of universal health care coverage to adapt to new challenges in order to reach sustainable improvements of basic health indicators compared to other countries in Asia and the western Pacific region. He presented eight essential factors to achieve these goals. And he also mentioned possible collaboration areas between Japan and Viet Nam as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), aging, health checkups, etc., emphasizing that bilateral cooperation needs to be strengthened between universities, research institutes, hospitals, and so forth. He also pointed out the importance of continuous dialogue and cooperation between the two countries.

**Panel Discussion (50 minutes):**

Moderator; Dr Mitsuhiro Ushio, Director, Hitachinaka Public Health Center  
Former Health Policy Advisor to Ministry of Health, Viet Nam

**Panelist (5 minutes each initial presentation, followed by 20 minutes discussion):**

Two panelists, each from Viet Nam and Japan.

1. Dr Pham Nguyen Quy,  
Department of Medical Oncology, Kyoto Miniren Central Hospital.  
**‘Alleviating the Burden of Cancer in Viet Nam a Perspective on Advances, Challenges, and Future Directions’**

First, Dr Quy showed that the prevalence of NCDs’ in Viet Nam had increased dramatically in the past 30 years. He also said that cancer is one of the top ten causes of death and is a major problem, as are chronic diseases. He mentioned that it had been a struggle to cope with the complexity of treatment and the diversity of patient needs, as 60-70% of cases of diagnosed cancers are at the late stage.

He also raised Viet Nam’s challenges: overworked hospitals, lack of specialists, lack of teamwork and supportive networks in and outside the hospital results in patients being left alone at home, dealing with fake news and rumors, patients dropping out of treatment, the standard treatment is not equally distributed because of the gap in knowledge and poor compliance. However, he stressed that the advantages of Viet Nam are in the young and active population who are eager to learn and want to apply innovation and technology in the healthcare system. Since Dr Quy has learned techniques from Japan such as an evidence-based approach, cost-effectiveness, success in alleviating the burden of cancer etc., he concluded that he would like to increase the collaboration between the two countries.

2. Ms Pham Thi Minh Chau, Deputy Director,  
International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Health, Viet Nam  
**‘Viet Nam-Japan Health Cooperation’**

Ms Chau shared that Japan is the largest bilateral donor to Viet Nam’s health sector and introduced several projects of Viet Nam-Japan cooperation, including Japan’s support for COVID-19 prevention. Ms Chau also showed that the following are strengths of the Japanese Health system; treatment or control of NCDs, health checkups, health care for older people, and application of information technology in health care. Then, she proposed some areas of cooperation with Japan in the future: NCDs’ and CDs’ prevention and control, R&D and production of vaccines, cancer and COVID-19 drugs, more technical or financial support to health care for aging populations, and strengthening bilateral cooperation between Vietnamese and Japanese universities, research institutes, health facilities.

3. Mr Yukinori Tominaga,  
Chairperson of Japanese Pharmaceutical Alliance in Viet Nam  
**‘Japanese Pharmaceutical Alliance in Viet Nam’**

Mr Tominaga briefly introduced the Japanese Pharmaceutical Alliance in Viet Nam (JPAV), which was established five years ago and has contributed to the quality of life in Vietnamese by cooperating with the Japanese government and the Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Association (JPMA). He presented two current collaborations for Viet Nam with the Japanese embassy or JICA. He also raised difficulties in marketing authorization and renewal licenses for pharmaceutical products in Viet Nam. He concluded by saying that he looked forward to the establishment of a new platform to discuss between Japanese and Vietnamese industries’ mutual expectations, feasible collaborations, or difficulties.

4. Dr Koji Wada, Professor, Department of Public Health,  
Faculty of Medicine, International University of Health and Welfare  
**‘A collaboration between Viet Nam and Japan–Ningen Dock Health  
Check-up Center’**

Dr Wada discussed an example of collaboration between Viet Nam and Japan to open the new ‘Ningen Dock’, a health checkup center in Ho Chi Minh city. He said it was a big challenge for him because it required not only technical assistance but also a decade of time for initiating their business. This center opened in 2018 through the efforts and contributions of many people and now has over 5000 customers. He also introduced the initiative at the International University of Health and Welfare: The medical education for students from Viet Nam since 2017. He expected they would become medical doctors receiving medical licenses in Japan in 2023. He closed with three messages: 1) there are many challenges to implement projects 2) people in Viet Nam may enjoy many benefits from the services supported by Japan for healthy aging and preventing NCDs 3) the cooperation among private institutions can also induce synergistic effects in improving health care services in Viet Nam.

**<Discussion>****Q1. What do you think is a more suitable field to start a collaboration between Japan and the Viet Nam?**

All panelists recommended elderly care as a top priority for the collaboration, having collaborative work that leverages the strengths of both countries. Regarding points of view from industries, it was also suggested, for example, to combine the production capability of Vietnamese companies with the technology capability of Japanese companies in terms of manufacturing.

**Q2. Any new business and investment trends among Japanese businesses in the Viet Nam health sector?**

From the pharmaceutical perspective, Mr Tominaga noted that the Vietnamese market, which has already reached 6 billion, is very attractive and Japanese companies are interested in investing more in the Vietnamese market. Dr Wada pointed out that there are demands for high-quality Japanese products, but they are more expensive than products made in India, Korea, or China. Therefore, he recommended holding a dialogue with medical doctors and the Minister of Health to introduce Japanese technologies to Viet Nam.

To close this session, Dr Ushio, the moderator, insisted on the necessity of the platform to discuss priority and urgent issues based on our experiences at the very early stages of collaboration between Japan and Viet Nam. He concluded that it is the dream that a platform, Medical Excellence Viet Nam, which will be established between industry, government, academia, and institutions, expand the cooperation of Viet Nam.

**Special Advice (5 minutes):**

Dr Tran Thi Giang Huong

Director, Program for Disease Control, WHO WPRO

Dr Huong, based on her rich experience in Japan-Vietnam cooperation, gave her special advice on the expected areas of comprehensive and effective partnership between Vietnam and Japan; aging, NCDs' prevention and control, such as cancer, medical checkups, pharmaceutical affairs, medical equipment, including telemedicine, and so on to better health for the Asian region. She also pointed out that the experience and network of Health Partnership Group by Vietnamese MOH should be used as a reference when considering the framework-building for collaboration among industry, government, academia, and medical professionals in both countries.

**Concluding remarks (5 minutes):**

Dr Hiroki Nakatani

Special Advisor to the President of ERIA

From the two keynote addresses, Dr Nakatani agreed that the cooperative relationship in the health care sector between Japan and Viet Nam is not only beneficial to each country but also to the region, and that the cooperation should be mutually beneficial and wide-ranging. Dr Nakatani also touched on the issue of an aging society, noting that an aging society creates great business opportunities and encourages broad cooperation between the two countries.

He mentioned that the presentations from the speakers and feedback from the audience made it clear that there are many issues related to health care in Viet Nam and Japan that need to be discussed, such as cancer, NCDs, aging, drugs, vaccines, and medical facilities, and that it is urgent to create a platform to discuss these issues. He proposed having a discussion meeting to deepen these subjects, encouraging establishing a unique Vietnamese platform for further mutual collaboration between Viet Nam and Japan.

**[Click here to relive the event.](#)**