
PREFACE

It is a great pleasure to be given the opportunity to write this preface. Last July I organized the 3-day annual meeting of the Japanese Society of Sleep Research in Tokyo. I am proud to say that the meeting was successful and fruitful with enormous cooperation from the staff of the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry and the National Institute of Mental Health. Two plenary lectures given by Dr Alfred J. Lewy and Dr Jacques Montplaisir were exciting and enlightening. Six symposia were rewarding to the participants. This was the first time in the history of the annual meeting that more than 100 posters were presented and more than 1000 researchers participated in the meeting. Recently the number of society members markedly increased to 1700, and the area of specialty of the members is now much broader, from researchers of basic sciences to engineers. The clinical research field is also more diverse, such as psychiatry, internal medicine, respiratory medicine, otolaryngology, oral surgery, and dentistry, among others, indicating that somnology is indeed a multidisciplinary research field that is receiving growing attention. Topics discussed in the meeting covered various aspects from sleep science, sleep medicine, to sleep sociology.

This popularity of somnology is also reflected in the development of this journal *Sleep and Biological Rhythms*. Its quality enhances with each volume, and it is becoming international. I believe that Japanese scientists should have their own journal providing original findings and information from their country, Japan. Japanese scientists tend to submit high quality papers to well-established important international journals, instead of recently established peer-reviewed Japanese journals. It is important for Japanese scientists to make efforts to foster quality international journals in their own country.

Recently, the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) published a report entitled 'Proposal regarding the establishment of the scientific field of somnology in Japan and promotion of its study'. The aim of this proposal concerning somnology was to integrate the various sleep-related studies that are currently conducted in many different fields and to create an academic system

for this scientific field. For the newly proposed field of somnology, there are three areas of sleep-related studies. The first is 'sleep science' in which basic studies are implemented involving molecular biology and genetic studies. The second is 'sleep medicine' which attempts to clinically treat hyposomnia and hypersomnia. As dentistry and pharmacology are also related to this area, this second area is called 'sleep medicine-dentistry-pharmacology'. The third is 'sleep sociology' which attempts to treat social problems related to sleep, such as those regarding the so-called 'night-based society', shift work, and accidents resulting from shift work. The above represents the content of the proposal by the SCJ in which these three major study areas are integrated under the main theme of 'sleep'. The purpose of this proposal is: to further promote sleep studies in a way that transcends each specific field; to apply and reflect the results of such studies in society; to protect the society from sleep disorders; to improve people's overall health; to prevent accidents such as those caused by drowsiness; and to eventually increase relevant economic effects produced by better sleep habits.

There are important sleep problems which remain to be solved. In my humble opinion, one of the most important issues would be resolving sleep shortage. Our society, active round the clock, is shortening sleep hours. Such lack of sleep may cause serious damage to both the physical and mental health of children. This problem must be recognized by society to prevent health problems in children. Sleep researchers must also pay more attention to this problem and propose solutions to the community. Shift work is another problem. More than 6 million people are said to be on shift work in Japan. Shift work causes numerous health problems to many, yet it is essential for helping society to function as well as ensuring security in the community. It is therefore urgent that we find ways to minimize adverse effects of shift work.

The two issues above are just a few examples. It is imperative to promote sleep research to improve our quality of life.

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