

Expert Insights

Promoting Medical Innovations to Make Them Available to Patients as Soon as Possible



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Graduated in 1983 from the Keio University School of Medicine. After working as an Instructor, Department of Internal Medicine, Keio University School of Medicine, he took up a post as Bioengineer Step IV, Institute for Biomedical Engineering, University of California San Diego.

His appointments include Professor and Chair, Department of Biochemistry, Keio University School of Medicine in 2001, Dean, Keio University School of Medicine in 2007, and Leader, Global Center of Excellence for Life Sciences, Human Metabolomic Systems Biology from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

He took up his current position in April 2015. He is also Leader, Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), Exploratory Research for Advanced Technology (ERATO), Suematsu Gas Biology Project.

His main fields of study are biochemistry and gas biology.

The Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) was established in April 2015 to take on a central role in medical research and development and in establishing the environment for such work.

AMED's mission is to bring basic and clinical research in the medical field into practical use so that it can be made available to patients as soon as possible. To achieve this, it will combine the medical research and development budgets of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and undertake seamless management extending from basic to applied research and development by allocating funding in a targeted and strategic manner based on "expert" reviews.

The government's "Healthcare Policy" aims to create a "society of health and longevity," by establishing world-leading medical technology and services, and by encouraging the creation and overseas expansion of healthcare industries. While the global market for medical devices is expected to continue expanding in response to factors such as the advanced aging of populations around the world and the growth in demand for healthcare in emerging economies, imports continue to exceed exports in the Japanese market, resulting in a trade deficit that has risen to approximately 800 billion yen. While Japan has capabilities in basic research and technology that are amongst the best in the world, it has lagged on practical applications. If it is to transform the medical device sector into a leading industry supporting its growth, Japan needs to press ahead with innovation in research and development and produce innovative Japanese-made devices and other systems that are internationally competitive.

To achieve this, AMED is embarking on an "all-Japan medical device development" campaign comprised of a wide range of initiatives involving collaboration between industry, academia, and government, and with the healthcare and engineering sectors working together. One such example is ongoing consultancy with seamless support through all phases, the effective identification of the needs of the clinical workplace; offering a full range of facilitation functions from basic research at universities to clinical research at companies, medical institutions, and elsewhere; clinical research and trials; and practical applications. While expanding sales channels by making full use of Japan's strengths in robotics and information technology (IT) and the manufacturing skills of small and medium-sized companies to achieve medical devices, system development, and product packaging that anticipate the future of medicine is not a simple objective, shifting to a "21st century model" for how to approach medical research and development should necessarily be expected to maximize the pace of research and development. I believe that the practical realization of world-renowned Japanese quality can do a lot to advance healthcare innovation.

By enhancing the quality and efficiency of healthcare, extending the healthy life expectancy of the Japanese people, and making innovative developments available to patients as soon as possible, AMED hopes to continuously provide a driving force behind the growth of Japan.