



Excerpts
From
Japan Society for Dying with Dignity Newsletter
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Mr. Soichiro Iwao Elected as the New President

Mr. Igata (Honorary President) Led the Movement for the Last 10 years



The New President, Mr. Iwao (center left) shaking hands with Mr. Igata (center right)

On June 3, Mr. Akihiro Igata (83) retired from leading the Dying with Dignity movement and was succeeded by Mr. Soichiro Iwao (64), Vice President of JSDD and Visiting Professor of Keio University School of Medicine, who was elected with a unanimous vote at the board meeting. With a new leadership, the team is ready to push the legalization of Living Will and other issues with its full force.

Mr. Igata became the fifth President of the Board in May 2002. His achievements include hosting the World Congress in Tokyo and helping form and guide a coalition group of Diet members to look into legalizing the Living Will. As he reached his ten year milestone as the President, he stated that it was time to hand it over to the young and more energetic new generation. Although known as a quiet, soft spoken gentleman, Mr. Igata took a strong, persuasive approach at various council meetings held by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and displayed a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and spirit on the matter of legalizing Living Will.

In his inaugural speech, Mr. Iwao emphasized that legalization of the Living Will is top priority for JSDD, and asked all members to become active and come together to achieve this goal. Mr. Igata was nominated and awarded the title of Honorary President.

As of June 11, 2012, JSDD has 124, 326 members.



**Vitalization of the Movement,
Legalization of Living Will
Inaugural Address: Incoming President, Mr. Soichiro Iwao**

I am honored to be elected as the new President of JSDD at the Board Member Meeting on June 3. My relationship with Mr. Igata goes back a quarter of a century. At the time, I was the Administrative Medical Officer for the Environment Agency, assigned to deal with the Minamata disease. I moved to deal with brain death issue, then on to the enactment of the Brain Transplant Law in the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Mr. Igata has given me such thorough guidance and mentorship for all those years.

My first encounter with JSDD was when I was working as the Director of Medical Policy Department. He came to my office one day and asked me to make a speech at the World Congress scheduled to be held in Tokyo in September, 2004. He was interested in the results of the nationwide survey I had conducted on people's awareness and how people wish to be treated medically at the end of their lives. My results were ready, so I contacted him. With enthusiasm, he immediately talked me into becoming a member of JSDD and asked for my assistance in increasing the size of the organization's membership by incorporating the importance of patient self determination rights, for which he strongly believes that the decision should be made voluntarily and free of duress. Since I was in agreement with him regarding the concept of the Living Will, I did not hesitate to become a member after retiring from my public service career.

As the new President, I will make every effort to move forward with the most important issue, the legalization of Living Will. We will certainly need an increase in membership and more aggressive action to achieve this goal. I will do my best to attend all of the regional meetings and to establish and maintain close communications with all of our members. Your support and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Resume for: Soichiro Iwao, MD, MPH, PhD (64 years old) Visiting Professor, Keio University School of Medicine Vice President, International Medical and Health Care University Director, WHO Center for Health Development Director of Medical Policy Department, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare Alumnus, Keio University, School of Medicine
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**High Expectations for the Movement's Progress,
Gratitude for 10 Years of Support
Farewell Address: Outgoing President, Mr. Akihiro Igata**

Exactly ten years have passed since I had the honor of becoming the President of the Board in May, 2002. Introduction of the draft bill honoring the patient's right to choose his/her own terminal health care in a Diet session was a big step forward. I take this opportunity to retire and to pass on the title of President to an energetic, high spirited man, Mr. Soichiro Iwao. No words can describe my gratitude to all the members who have supported me for such a long time. Looking back in the past years, over 120,000 people have joined JSDD. So many memorable events cross my mind, like a "revolving lantern."

Soon after I came on board, we successfully petitioned to initiate the legalization of Living Will, with 140,000 signatures of strong supporters. We helped form and guide a Diet member coalition (DMCDD) and set up workshops to research, study and discuss major issues on the topic. In 2004, JSDD hosted a successful Congress of the World Federation of Right-to-Die Societies in Tokyo. As a result of all of our effort, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Japan Medical Association and other related associations published guidelines for medical treatments given for terminal stage patients.

For the fact that I was there to witness the 30th anniversary of our society, seeing the revision of the Living Will, and so many unforgettable memories in those years, I am truly satisfied. I hereby like to express my gratitude once again for all the members. Thank you for allowing me to fulfill the responsibilities given to me as the President of the Board. Our movement for Death with Dignity has now entered a new page in our history. I sincerely wish all of you to stay healthy, and to support our new President, Mr. Iwao for further progress on this movement until we finally achieve our original goal, which has been pursued for so many years.

2nd Annual General Corporation/Members' Meeting

The Board of Directors Meeting

Election of Officers, Financial Report, Budget Planning, etc.

JSDD's 2nd Annual Corporation Members Meeting was held on June 3at Hotel Kizankan in Hongo, Tokyo. A total of 67 members attended, out of which 18 were present by proxy. Four agenda topics including election of directors and auditor were submitted and approved without objection. Our guest speaker, Ms. Kaoruko Aida, Associate Professor of Tokyo University, gave a lecture after the meeting on the recent trend of stomach tube feeding.

In his address after the meeting was adjourned, Mr. Igata stated that although we are still discussing the pros and cons of legalizing the Living Will, it is certainly moving forward. He expressed his strong belief that the new President and his new team will make this goal a reality.

Movements in Legislation

Diet Member Coalition for Dying with Dignity (DMCDD)

In the general meeting held on June 6, DMCDD (121 members led by Mr. Teruhiko Mashiko) introduced a second draft bill, which adds the patients' right to "withdraw" any existing life prolonging measures as well as refusal of initiating any life prolonging measures, which is already in the first draft bill. With the introduction of this second bill, both drafts are now on the table for further discussion. The point of contention within DMCDD now is the scope of protection for patients' right to "withdraw" life prolonging measures. In other words, DMCDD must determine whether the patient has the right to refuse such measures only initially or whether this right extends to withdrawal or termination of existing measures at any time.

The first draft bill introduced in December 2011 contained the following main points:

- Life prolonging measures can only be withheld by a patient when his or her intent was clearly expressed, and only with family's consent.
- "Withholding" only refers to refusal of any new life prolonging measures at time of administration.
- The patient's intent must be in writing(Living Will) or stipulated on the form by the Ordinance of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Two major oppositions have surfaced over the two draft bills. One opposition is a protest group of physically disabled citizens and a statement by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, and the other is a group within JSDD, demanding the addition of the patient's right to "withdraw" or terminate any existing life prolonging measures at any time.

On March 22, DMCDD opened a general meeting and conducted a hearing for the group of physically disabled citizens protesting the initial bill. During the hearing, one ALS patient in a wheel chair with a respirator expressed his opinion on a computer screen with his assistant reading out his message.

On April 24, the members of the Liberal Democratic Party belonging to the DMCDD held a meeting. One of the topics discussed was regarding the negative view, the anxiety and fear that disabled citizens have toward legalization of Living Will. Health care providers who frequently face administering of life prolonging measures argued that legalizing only the commencement of such measures and not the termination or withdrawal of them would be rather meaningless. Whether or not to include patients' right to terminate or withdraw already administered life prolonging measures, which was the original main issue brought up by JSDD, is up for reconsideration.

While reflecting on the above social movements, DCMDD reviewed the previous draft bill and introduced the following two draft bills to be processed through the Legal Bureau of the House of Representatives:

First Draft Bill: Its main point is to protect patients' right to "withhold" commencement of any life prolonging measures only. It will be worded carefully to not dishonor the dignity of disabled citizens. It adds that this law does not prohibit situations outside of its jurisdiction (or situations in which this law does not apply).

Second Draft Bill: Its main point is to protect the patient' right to "withdraw" any life prolonging measures already in place. It will not dishonor the dignity of disabled citizens and does not prohibit situations outside of its jurisdiction (or situations in which this law does not apply).

Both bills specifically state that they do not prohibit the use of life prolonging measures or situations not covered by this law to avoid confusion among physicians who may hesitate to administer other life prolonging measures, thereby setting a trend of decline in treating terminally ill patients as a whole.

On June 6, DCMDD opened a general meeting and conducted a hearing from Japan Medical Association and Japan Bar Association to gain their opinions. Introducing two bills will most likely slow down the process of Living Will legalization. However, President Soichiro Iwao states that DCMDD's recognition of "withdrawing" of life prolonging measures, not only "withholding" the commencement of such measures, is a rather significant step forward.

World Congress in Zürich

The six-day 19th Congress of World Federation of Right to Die Societies was held in Zürich, Switzerland starting on June 13. Three delegates attended the Congress from JSDD: Mr. Soichiro Iwao, President, Mr. Kazuhiro Nagao, Vice President, and Mr. Yukio Matsuo, a member from Hokuriku Chapter. There was an election of directors at the World Federation meeting, and Mr. Neil Francis from Dying with Dignity Victoria, Australia was elected as the New President. Mr. Soichiro Iwao was elected as a new board director.