Editorial

Transitions and Developments of Therapeutics

With the 79th Annual Meeting of Japanese Society of Internal Medicine a general estimation persists that the clinical medicine of this country, and the medical care in its turn, owe what they are today to its part played by this society.

No doubt does the medical care of today differ from what it used to be. The good results we are enjoying are represented point-blank by the fact that the average life expectancy in this country has dramatically lengthened in the past 30 years of the postwar period,

While in 1947, a male had only 50.06 years to live, and a female 53.96 on an average, in 1980, a male enjoyed an average life of 73.32, and a female that of 78.83 years, a plain model of high growth rate.

Naturally, there have been steadily improving environmental sanitation and nutrition on one hand, on the other, however, no one should be in a position to rebut the triumph of medical practice in this respect.

In order to pinpoint in which aspect and how much progress was actually attained, an attempt was made to materialize its development and advancement in terms of practical figures with the stress on the clinical records of the past 20 years (1961-1980) of the First Department of Medicine, University of Tokyo.

As a result of this survey, a fact emerges that after all, therapeutics is also gaining in scientism as steadfastly as ever. In addition, there is that realization that the major part of the therapeutics in practice has been and is in a way a secondary phenomenon developing and growing hand in hand with the ever-advancing pathogenesis and pathophysiology, or the ever-renewing diagnostics resting on these theories a firm foundation.

Take some examples and ask this question. What has made that unprecedented improvement in therapeutical results of early gastric cancer possible? The answer is as plain as follows: Were it not for X-ray and endoscope, the exceptional diagnostic capability would be not ours now.

As a matter of course, it brings us yet another realization that this caused a dramatic change in medical treatment of gastroenterological diseases.

We know prognoses of hepatitis and nephritis are being improved, which is only possible through an accurate diagnosis beforehand by means of a functional test or biopsy of each organ. Endocrine diseases represent most of this case, so microanalysis of hormone by the RIA method has changed its clinic completely. It's surprising how many more we find of these cases.

On the other hand, however, there are not a few diseases that are within the reach of our diagnosis, but beyond our therapeuticol control, nonetheless. Diagnosis is certainly there. But we have yet to see an early diagnosis. α-fetoprotein and imaging diagnostic method have also enhanced the diagnostical capacity for liver cancer the way no one has ever dreamed of. All this is yet wanting in perfect cure.

Invariably, therapeutics is susceptible to human sentiment. “Belief makes faith grow out of sargine's head”, which means “Faith will move a mountain” in English is an old saying in this country satirizing therapeutics. With all the latest advancement in this field it goes without saying that even today not the whole area is covered with scientism.

But as is already mentioned before, we are to speak of the interdependence and correlation of diagnosis and therapeutics, the latter has just strictly to abide within scientism. For how much it has to deal with an “uncertain congregation”, the human being, it is an indubitable fact that it is science. Therapeutics will and shall add to the effect of scientism, and so shall we hope.

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