Welcome back lecture 1

Childhood Cancer Program and Research Topics in Korea

Seung Hoon Choi, M.D.
Division of Pediatric Surgery, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea

JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) offered me a good opportunity to study in Japan from January 20, 1986 to July 21, 1986. Five doctors from Hong Kong, China, Philippine, Indonesia and Korea formed one group and they studied Japanese medicine at National Children's Hospital in Setagaya, Tokyo. Korean medical education followed American system, so Japanese medical education was not familiar to me at that time. I was impressed that Japanese medical situation was very much similar to that of Korea, but Japanese medical education had exclusive way of its own. After I studied childhood solitary tumors in the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for two additional years, I returned to Yonsei University and encountered clinical and research activities.

Fortunately I have another chance of studying in Japan. Professor Tsuchida invited me as a visiting assistant professor at Tokyo University. I have stayed at Tokyo University from July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996. During this period, I have learned molecular studies concerning childhood solid tumors in Dr. Hayashi's laboratory and I have done several chemosensitivity tests with new chemotherapeutic agents with Professor Tsuchida.

After I came back to my university from Tokyo, I have established a pediatric oncology laboratory. My major interest in pediatric oncology is oncogene, suppressor gene, and apoptosis. Korean government is interested in advanced technology—we want to catch up with developed countries in ten years. BK21 (Brain Korea 21) is a government project which promote basic science. I have been selected as a member of BK21. I am going receive 45,000 U. S. dollars each year for seven consecutive years. For social activities, I am a member of executive committee of Korean Pediatric Surgical Association. I have served secretary general of this society for two years.

My training in Japan contributed very much to my current clinical and research activity. I have close relationship with my former teachers and friends in Japan regarding my clinical and research work.

I would like to introduce current childhood cancer program in Korea and part of my research work. National survey of registry program and Children's New Life Program are two kinds of childhood cancer program. RT-PCR assay for chimeric transcript is a useful tool for rapid and objective diagnosis of pediatric solid tumors.