

The President's Interview



2020 International President
Akira Senda

How do you feel being elected as the College's 2020 International President?

Of course, I am so honored and pleased to be elected. And I am also so excited to work for such an esteemed international organization, the ICD. However, on the other hand, I am also humbled to have been placed in the very important position of leading and contributing to our worldwide organization with such a long and illustrious history. It is a very big responsibility, and I sincerely request the support and understanding of the Executive Committee team members, the College Office staff and all International Councilors as well as the leadership of Fellows from all of our Sections around the world. Please join with me in my desire to strive together for a wonderful future of our College.

How did you make your decision to become a member of the profession of dentistry, and in particular what was the impetus for your interest in humanitarianism projects?

I was born in 1948, it was just 3 years after the 2nd World War, so I was one of "Baby Boomer" children. There were only 7 "university" dental schools in Japan after the war. When I was graduating from my high school, it was quite difficult to get in medical and/or dental schools as too less seats for too many applicants in those schools. However, I really wanted to work to contribute to people suffering from their illnesses and/or inferior oral health condition.

At that time, all dentists had to work harder to treat over 100 patients a day, so they call dentists working as like butterflies flying from flower to flower, and their treatments were called "3-minute treatments". In addition, it was considered a "Huge Higher Economic Growth Time", people in Japan had started to consume wealthy foods, sweets and so on. Hence all of Japanese children at the time had very bad oral health, and they strictly needed "Dental Care" that was even though "3-minutes treatments".

So, Japanese government decided to increase the number of the dental schools, and my school, Aichi Gakuin University, Nagoya was founded (1960) as the 1st Private Dental School after the War, and the 8th oldest dental school in Japan. When I was graduating from the school, and passed the National Board Examination of Dentist and acquired the license (DDS, 1973), there was still a huge lack of dentists in Japan. They were not allowed to focus prevention of oral diseases and innovating oral hygiene of people, that meant all dentists in

Japan were working in "battle field hospitals". I have never agreed with this approach, and I decided to study more scientific and modern dentistry as a researcher and teacher in my mother school. Since then I have been working at my school for over 46 years. During working in my school, I was involved in a public dental service team at the rural islands in Okinawa Prefecture, and I have experienced volunteer dental work as a team leader. I think that the experiences were succeeded to my humanitarian volunteer work in Mongolian rural areas. I am always happy to see healthy innocent children, and to make them healthy and happy, and I also love to work for and with young students and dentists.

Who are the people who have most influenced your personal and professional life?

Of course, my father is the most important person; he was a typical and strict professional soldier, but after the war, he turned into a very gentle and tender person to love music, taking photos and drawing. He had several friends from overseas although he was strict Japanese military guy. They have been often visiting us as family. So, I think that my global mind was from his treatment, I always watched his techniques on restorative dentistry, and I was always impacted by his artistic techniques. When I was in the University of Western Ontario, Canada, (1987-1988) as a visiting professor, I was so influenced by Dr. Ron Jordan, the author of the famous textbook, "Esthetic Composite Bonding", and my big brother Dr. Mike Suzuki. I learned a lot, not only clinical esthetic and adhesive dentistry, but also real internationality in dentistry. They are all great "Canucks", meaning a very good and lovely Canadian. Dr. Suzuki strongly recommended that I become involved in the ICD. After coming back to Japan, and when I was elected as a Professor and Chair of the department, I was fortunate to be nominated and inducted into ICD. I always appreciate these influential people in my life and try to follow their achievements in dentistry and life.

Mr. President, do you have any hobbies?

That is the big question for me! Since I became the Professor and Chairman of the Department (1995), I have had very little free time to work harder with no Sunday nor holidays. One of my grandsons said that my grand-pa is a "traveler"! I have lost lots of hobbies such as playing tennis, golf and downhill skiing. When I was university student, I had a folk song band (copy band of "Peter Paul and Mary") and played acoustic base and guitar. I was "Paul"! So that my English has been coming from PPM, '50s and '70s songs! I also love driving cars, especially driving down winding roads. But, very few people including my wife like to drive with me on such journeys!

What are your goals and/or plans you hope to realize during your presidency?

As I have mentioned, as the President of 2020 Centennial year of ICD, I really want to make the celebration successful together with all Fellows from all over the world. There will be no doubt between all Fellows in succeeding the success to next centennial celebration.

We, all ICD Fellows, are under one umbrella. I believe this particular umbrella means that we Fellows are all "dentists" that have a universal task and responsibility of contributing health and happiness to all humankind in the world as dental professionals. So, we should be tied up more tightly. We are "One Team" that means "One for All and All for One"! I would propose all Sections and Regions to enhance exchanges between Sections, and to try to understand each other in how to approach to our universal goal of contributing to humankind. So, I also would focus to motivate communications between Sections and the College Office.

I would like to strongly increase the contributions and impact on the College from the Communication and Membership committees during my presidency. I believe doing so would help our humanitarian projects to be better recognized worldwide. We can advance this goal as well by means of collaborations with other related international organizations such as WHO, FDI, IADR and so on. Of course, I don't believe this task would be carried easily, so I will take a first step during my presidency.