

Greetings

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It is indeed a great honor for me to be given this opportunity to make an opening remark on behalf of the Occupational Health Service Center of Japan Industrial Safety and Health Association (JISHA) to the members participating in this Tokyo Medical University International Symposium. The industrial society of Japan is now at a turning point. It is considered that this issue might influence occupational health and safety. It is necessary therefore to consider the following seven points and to design some measures against possible problems. First is the question of dealing with the aging working population. Secondly, taking some aggressive steps for increasingly relevant mental stress. Third is the creation of comfortable pleasant working environments. Fourth is the ability to cope with new technologies. Fifth is the ability to deal with changes taking place in the working patterns. Sixth is the ability to cope with the world of deregulation. Seventh is the question of dealing with the international global trends. These are the seven major challenges that need to be addressed.

With these problems in the background, the Japan Ministry of Labor has established a 5 year program called the Ninth Occupational Injuries and Diseases Prevention Program which covers the years between 1998 and the year 2002. Within this program, the most important point is that stress management be implemented in order to secure the health of the workers. In another words, in order to cope with the stressors and the increase in mental stress, we need to be able to do the following. First, implement comprehensive research in investigation for the prevention of health hazards due to stress, particularly within working areas where white collar workers are predominantly active, and for such results or such research be spread out into the society. Secondly, increase opportunities for the training of managers and supervisors.

Thirdly, increase occasions to educate the workers themselves so that they would be able to control stress in an appropriate manner. Fourthly, improve on stress-related counseling systems. Fifth, ensure wide spread stress management availability in workplaces. Since 1995, the Ministry of Labor has been implementing research relating to work-related stress and health consequences. This has been implemented with a team of investigators headed by Professor Masaaki Kato of the Tokyo Medical University. The participants of this symposium are important members of the team including Professor Norito Kawakami of Gifu University, Professor Teruichi Shimomitsu of the Tokyo Medical University, Professor Satoru Shima of Tokyo Keizai University as well as Dr. Takeshi Kikkawa of the National Mental Health Center. The research of this group brought about much results and the research program is expected to be completed in 1999. The holding of this present symposium is indeed very timely, and we would like to see the results of the research work in Japan be reflected in the discussion as well as to take this opportunity to learn more about the problems of occupational stress in the various industrialized or post industrialized countries including Europe, US, and Japan so that will be able to discuss further the best possible stress management programs to be implemented in those three post industrial settings as we look towards the 21st century.

In closing, I would like to pay my greatest respect to the members of the Tokyo Medical University who have planned on the symposium. I would like to extend my hearty welcome and appreciation to Professor Lennart Levi of Karolinska Institute, Dr. Steven L. Sauter representing NIOSH at the US. I would also like to welcome all of the researchers from the U.S. and various countries of Europe.