

Speech by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan  
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US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Meeting on  
Vice President Biden's Cancer Moonshot Initiative

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Honorable Secretary Burwell, Minister Chung, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. It is my great pleasure to be here at the Trilateral Meeting on Vice President Biden's Cancer Moonshot Initiative on our common fight against cancer.

In Japan, currently about one-third of deaths are caused by cancer. However, this is not mere vital statistics; behind solemn numbers, there lie countless pains and sufferings, endured not only by patients themselves, but also by families and friends losing their loved ones. We must listen to their silent voices of agony and earnest wishes to survive, and summon our unbeatable courage and determination to overcome cancer.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our three countries have many common features in the state of cancer but with some differences.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in all three countries, whereas breast cancer is more prevalent in the United States, and gastric and liver cancers are more so in Korea and Japan.

United States is well-known for its innovative capacity for health care R&D and ingenious activities of health care entrepreneurs, giving rise to recent numerous inventive cancer treatments.

Korea has a single health insurance and payment review system thoroughly connected and analyzed by a computer network, which enable complete enumeration of certain cancer directory.

We, Japan, have fairly smooth access to care throughout the country without large degree of differences of care level to be delivered, leading to cancer detection at

significantly earlier stages. Cancer screening with endoscopy is another strength that contributes to early detection particularly of gastric cancer. We also have a substantial number of seeds in basic cancer research which can lead to the recent example of an immune check-point inhibitor.

Therefore, I strongly believe that joint initiatives by three countries with many common features, bringing together our unique contributions, would formulate the best mingled endeavor for the first time in cancer history.

Ladies and gentleman,

Mr. Biden's "Cancer Moonshot" initiative, which I highly respect, shed light upon many indispensable features in our fight against cancer.

In Japan, our cancer program consists of three cornerstones: preventing avoidable deaths, promoting cancer research and therapeutics, and building a society that enables people to live with cancer. However, what people really wish is to cure cancer. We must develop innovative diagnostics and treatments that are accessible at an affordable cost. We must also prioritize childhood cancers and rare cancers for which treatment options are very limited. To these ends, we need to work with doctors, researchers, and patients including cancer survivors. It is a common challenge to all of us.

Precision medicine and immuno-therapy bring about more effective care with less debilitating adverse effects than conventional treatments. Their development requires the best and the brightest researchers from multi-disciplinary sectors including medicine, bio-science, physics, radiology and computer science, all working together. Numerous Japanese research institutions launched initiatives to engage research institutions, academia and industry, which our Ministry strongly supports. In order to find the right treatment for the right patient at the right time, we need to accumulate integrated and carefully analyzed proteogenomic and clinical data. This endeavor can be drastically expedited by fully utilizing artificial intelligence and sharing data across borders. Our government will drastically enhance this strategy jointly with the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development, or AMED, and the Japanese National Cancer Center, or NCC, in the coming years.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We, the Japanese Government, will fully support the "Cancer Moonshot" initiative. And I am totally convinced that the United States, Korea and Japan constitute a strong partnership under our common vision to fight against cancer.

Cancer patients can no longer wait. With a shared sense of utmost urgency, Japan is fully committed to go hand-in-hand with the United States and Korea to accelerate the way toward overcoming cancer.

Thank you.