

Development of Asian dietetics and the further solidarity of dietitians

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In 1991, when the 6th Asian Congress of Nutrition (ACN) was held in Kuala Lumpur, the current Asian Federation of Dietetic Association (AFDA)'s predecessor, the Asian Forum of Dietetic Professionals (AFDP) was born, and Dr. Leh-Chii Chwang was elected as the first president. I still remember that Hong Kong, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taipei, Thailand and Japan signed the Declaration. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the many stakeholders who have contributed to the development of AFDA over the last 30 years.

Now, there are three issues that were enthusiastically discussed during the founding period of AFDA and have not changed even today.

One is to activate research on dietetics as well as nutrition in order to make nutrition useful to society. In general, as medicine advances, medical care develops, and people can greatly benefit from it. However, even if basic research in nutrition progresses, it does not lead directly to a solution for malnutrition. Despite significant advances in nutritional research in recent years, the world is still suffering from the double burden of malnutrition, a mixture of hunger and obesity, and the situation is getting worse rather than being resolved. This is because research in dietetics with a focus on practical nutrition has not progressed.

The reason why dietetics has not progressed is that physiology and biochemical research centered on energy and nutrients are easy to tackle because research methods are established and the results are clear, but dietetics is a complicated matter. In order to optimize energy and nutrient intake, it is necessary to adjust the content of foods, the combinations of foods, and the menus, which involve the households, as well as the agriculture, industries, and economies, customs, and even culture in which people live. In other words, actual nutritional improvement requires these modifications, taking into account a wide variety of vector (direction and force) effects. It is not possible through the efforts of individuals, one region, or one nation alone.

The second is the issue of Asia. At present, Asia

world, with remarkable economic development, and is the most ethnically diverse and populous area in the world. The changes and problems of the whole world are currently concentrated in Asia and the Middle East. Moreover, each Asian country has a long cultural tradition and has a unique diet. Moreover, many countries have been influenced by the developed countries of Europe and by the United States and have sought rapid economic growth in order to reduce poverty and attain affluence. Western foods with high energy and a high content of various nutrients, temporarily solve a country's undernutrition, but eventually become an inducer of obesity and non-communicable diseases (lifestyle-related diseases). If left unchecked, this will lead to an increase in medical expenses and will have an adverse effect on national finances with the advent of an aging society.

Third is the immaturity of the dietitian system. It is necessary that the education and training system for dietitians which is conducted independent from nutritionists and medical doctors for nutrition, that they have their own social roles, and that they be certified as officially recognized professions, but there are still variations in each country.

Despite these three issues, the westernization, simplification, and modernization of meals will progress in Asian countries in the future. Furthermore, we need to contribute to the creation of a sustainable society where no one is left behind. It is nutrition in Asia that can play a role in such a difficult situation. The reason for this is that Asians respect nature and have a farming culture that has been nurtured in nature. If Asian dietetics, which should fuse this food culture and scientific rationality, is developed, it can be transmitted as a model for the world.

To that end, it is necessary to further develop the AFDA through further cooperation of the dietetic associations of each country.

Fortunately, Asia Congress of Dietetics (ACD) will be held in Yokohama in Japan from August 19th (Friday) to 21st (Sunday), 2022. We look forward to the participation of many people and a great deal of discussion about Asian dietetics and nutrition.

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