Editorial

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'Prevention is better than cure' is a well-known proverb that applies to every aspect of life. Nowhere does this proverb hold more truth than in the world of medicine, this has long been in the mind of all medical professionals in treating patients and in practising medicine. It is our sincere hope that this all important concept be realized in the 21st century.

The WHO has drawn up an action plan entitled, 'The Prevention and Management of Neurotrauma' and launched a large-scale movement that will continue into the next century. In 1994, during the 33rd annual scientific meeting of the International Medical Society of Paraplegia held in Kobe, the organization hosted an open international symposium, 'Prevention of Spinal Cord Injuries'. The Symposium was a huge success, helping both the participants and local residents increase their interest in, and knowledge of, measures to prevent spinal cord injuries.

Unfortunately, eight months later, Kobe suffered a massive earthquake, killing 6,500 and injuring 34,000 residents. We sincerely hope that what the people of Kobe learned through this open symposium proved useful in their struggles to cope with this major disaster. Due to scheduling difficulties, however, Symposium participants did not have the time to discuss ways to prevent spinal injuries during an earthquake. This Japanese issue features an extensive report by Dr Soji Maruo *et al.*, describing how the Kobe earthquake actually occurred and introducing some prevention measures. Earthquakes occur all over the world over and over again, and there are no ways of preventing them from happening. Therefore, the suggestions made by Maruo *et al.* on how to prevent spinal and other injuries are extremely timely and significant indeed. While prevention measures are steadily being established and widely disseminated, the treatment to normalize spinal injury patients is yet to be developed. More efforts are required to solve this difficult task.

The collection of papers submitted for publication in this issue was taken mainly from a total of 154 papers which were read at the 30th annual meeting of the Japanese Medical Society of Paraplegia held in Asahikawa in November 1994. The topics, I believe were chosen to provide a broad and a deep perspective on current knowledge of spine and spinal cord disorders. This Japanese issue will present among

others, some papers of the latest advances in clinical art and clinical science in this field, including Fujimura *et al.*'s technically specific and highly successful anterior decompression and fusion using a manubrium splitting approach for OPLL of the upper thoracic spine, and Kawauchi *et al.*'s study on specific myeloscopic diagnosis and the significance for adhesive arachnoiditis in patients with lumbar spinal canal stenosis. The paper by Baba *et al.* is concerned with the slipped posterior end-plate which exclusively sustains the immature lumbar spine and frequently caused lumbosacral radiculopathy and the cauda equina syndrome. From the nationwide spinal cord injury registry between 1990 and 1992, sports-related spinal cord injury is reviewed by Katoh and co-workers of the Injury Prevention Committee, which predominantly occurred in the younger generation. Both papers stressed the importance of the prevention programme or education of these disorders in adolescents. Concerning urological problems, Ishigooka *et al.*'s work on electrical pelvic floor stimulation for urinary incontinence in spinal cord injury patients provides interesting ideas and real advances in this field. Basic investigation on the primary pathology and secondary changes in the injured spinal cord has been enthusiastically challenged, and two papers feature in this Japanese issue, one, the effect of PDWHF and NGF on degeneration and regeneration of the injured spinal cord, is given by Hiraizumi and co-workers and the other one, the origin and mechanism of spinal cord pulsation, is by Matsuzaki and colleagues.

I thank them all for their efforts, and for the great work carried out. Many thanks also are given to Drs Shoichi Fujimura and Nobumasa Suzuki, the Secretaries of the Japanese Medical Society of Paraplegia, who helped in the selection of the papers. In closing, it is a distinct pleasure and honor to have the trust and support in this endeavour of Dr Phillip Harris, the Editor of *Spinal Cord*.

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