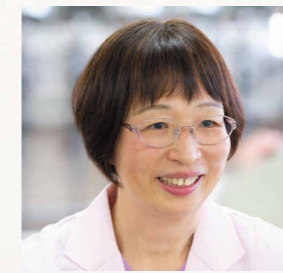


# Listening to Passion for Medical Care

TMDU Clinical Specialists

## Toshiko Adachi

Director,  
Department of Dental Hygiene



**Toshiko Adachi**

Graduated from the School for Dental Hygienists of the Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU) in 1986. Worked as a dental hygienist at TMDU Dental Hospital since April 1986. In 2009, appointed as the Director of the Department of Dental Hygiene, at the inception of the department.

### It is people who make an organization function. We are committed to fostering human resources capable of working with confidence, as dental hygienists at TMDU

In recent years, oral care has attracted much attention from perspectives such as general health and frailty. Dental hygienists who are specialists in oral hygiene are expanding their fields of activity. Under these circumstances, Director Toshiko Adachi has been committed to training dental hygienists and improving their qualifications, as the top leader of the Department of Dental Hygiene of the TMDU Dental Hospital.

#### The only dental hygienist who serves as the director at a hospital in Japan

According to Toshiko Adachi, who has been leading the department as a director of the Department of Dental Hygiene since its establishment: "Our hospital, where dental hygienists work in an independent 'department,' is unique in Japan. In addition, I am the only dental hygienist in the whole country who has a managerial position. I believe that this system has been established based on the traditions of TMDU, where dental hygienists assume overall responsibility in their activities, including preparing treatment records by themselves."

Thirty-two dental hygienists of the department are assigned to all hospital departments and outpatient specialty clinics, except for surgical

departments. In particular, in the Oral Health Care Clinic, dental hygienists take the lead in providing health guidance and treatment in collaboration with dentists. Recently, dental hygienists have been carrying out perioperative oral function management at the TMDU Medical Hospital.

"It is rewarding to work at the Oral Health Care Clinic, because I can discuss my opinions from a different perspective from doctors, taking into consideration the patient's social position and home environment. When I started the work 35 years ago, there were only six dental hygienists, and their major duties were administrative and clerical work at clinics in some departments. The situation now is completely different from what it was."

#### What attracts me to this job is interacting with people and listening to patients

As an oral care professional, Director Adachi has been committed to interacting with patients and expanding the range of activities of dental hygienists for many years.

"The mouth is indispensable not only for breathing and eating, but also for conversation and emotional expression. It is the job of

dental hygienists to "protect" the mouth. In recent years, there has been growing social interest in the relationships among oral care, systemic diseases and frailty. The TMDU has offered treatment with a greater focus on chewing and articulation of speech for a long time. Now I feel that the fruits of our work with doctors are finally spreading in society."

Even though working hard as the director, she always spares time to interact with patients in clinical practice. Every time she interacts with patients, she truly listens to them. This approach is rooted in the off-campus training and field work during her studies at the Dental Hygienist School.

"In order to encourage patients to change their behavior, it is essential to listen to what they say and discuss things with them before we teach or give information. As a student, I experienced practical training in various workplaces, such as local health offices, nursery schools and private clinics of companies. During practical training, I was impressed by my seniors attitudes, who conveyed dental information efficiently. Also in the field work in Iwate Prefecture where we carried out a questionnaire survey, I realized that preconceptions and stereotyping lead to failures. Through this experience, I learned the basics of the dental hygienist's job, which are attractive to me: interactions with people. This experience made me who I am today.

In addition, dentistry for persons with disabilities is the field in which I have been working for the longest time in my career. At special needs education schools in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, I am continuously working not only on health guidance, such as on tooth brushing, but also on providing a wide range of guidance, including that on eating.

"Even children with disabilities can brush their teeth thoroughly, if they are given health guidance continuously from kindergarten to high school ages. I was told that keeping their mouths clean would make it easier for them to get a job. One of their teachers said to me, 'tooth brushing provides benefits beyond the prevention of dental caries.' It gives me great pleasure to know that our core beliefs on good dental hygiene are being conveyed to them."

#### Wishing to pass on a vibrant working environment to the next generation

Director Adachi set forth the goal of "human resources development" when she assumed the position of director. In reference to the Department of Nursing, etc., she created manuals and curriculums through a trial-and-error process with the staff, and established a system for training new employees and supporting their career development. Moreover, she is also involved in establishing requirements for improving the qualifications of all dental hygienists, not only those working at TMDU, but also those at university hospitals nationwide.

"An organization cannot function without people. As a dental hygienist at TMDU, my goal is to foster human resources capable of working with confidence. Our staff members are often told, "You look like you enjoy your work." I would like to continue to foster a vibrant working environment for all staff members. Moreover, I think it is my responsibility as a director to pass on a great workplace to my younger colleagues."