

Message from the President on April 1, 2021 "Interdisciplinary Cooperation"

Yujiro Tanaka

President

Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU)

When I took office as president of Tokyo Medical and Dental University on April 1 last year, the COVID-19 pandemic was emerging. Indeed, in my first message to you as TMDU president I urged everyone to join forces to overcome the crisis, bearing in mind that "every crisis is an opportunity."

TMDU Medical Hospital admitted its first COVID-19 patient on April 2, 2020 and went on to admit a greater number of serious COVID-19 cases than any other hospital in Tokyo. The initiatives of the Medical Hospital and TMDU's research into COVID-19 centering on mutant strains have received wide media coverage, attracting positive recognition in society.

TMDU has benefited from support emanating from society. For example, TMDU received donations amounting to 260 million yen in fiscal 2020, a more than sixfold increase compared with the figure for the previous year. Concerns that TMDU might suffer economically have been dispelled by government subsidies.

Over and above the support forthcoming from society, what enabled TMDU to rise to the challenge was the cooperation of our faculty and staff under the slogan "Join forces to protect patients and coworkers from COVID-19." In this impressive collaborative endeavor, "Provide support rather than blaming" expresses the spirit animating the autonomous divisions of TMDU. I am deeply grateful to all of you.

Another major development of fiscal 2020 was the selection of TMDU as a Designated National University Corporation by Koichi Hagiuda, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology on October 15, 2020.

TMDU is the sole medical university among the nine Designated National University Corporations. As a leading institution in Japan, we recognize that it is our mission to “realize Total Healthcare for the world and humankind across the generations,” which is TMDU’s goal as a Designated National University Corporation.

That wraps up fiscal 2020. Now, let me comment on the basic policy for fiscal 2021.

Although there are no signs yet that the COVID-19 pandemic is in retreat, the progress TMDU has achieved in terms of “autonomy and cooperation” is gratifying. The divisions are demonstrating their ingenuity and respective strengths while working together. I would like to increase the tempo in fiscal 2021.

Our focus in fiscal 2021 is cooperation or collaboration within TMDU, in particular. We have been emphasizing and supporting an unprecedented degree of collaboration transcending specialties and fields.

Why do we prioritize collaboration within TMDU over collaboration with external parties? Far from intending to downgrade collaboration with external parties, I believe our promotion of interdisciplinary cooperation within TMDU will enhance TMDU’s added value and in fact contribute to the smooth progress of collaboration with external parties.

At TMDU, the Faculty of Medicine consists of the School of Medicine and the School of Health Care Sciences (Track of Nursing Science and Track of Medical Technology), and the Faculty

of Dentistry consists of the School of Dentistry and the School of Oral Health Care Sciences (Track of Oral Health Care Sciences and Track of Oral Health Engineering). TMDU also includes the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Medical Research Institute, the Institute of Biomaterials and Bioengineering, and the M&D Data Science Center.

Cooperation, such as interdisciplinary initiatives, among these highly specialized organizations has not necessarily been sufficient thus far.

In line with the trend toward greater cooperation necessitated by the need to combat COVID-19, the Medical University and the Dental University will join forces in October 2021 to become Tokyo Medical and Dental University Hospital. With an eye to deeper interdisciplinary cooperation, I have high expectations of this integration.

In *The Blue Bird* by Maurice Maeterlinck, the blue bird of happiness the children were seeking was actually all the while in a cage in their home. This may be true in your lives too. For example, after searching everywhere for partners to collaborate with you in your work, you may find an excellent partner nearby. This is not an uncommon experience.

I would like our executive staff to support interdisciplinary cooperation in the respective fields for which they are responsible, whether it be education, research, hospital administration, global affairs, information technology, or social collaboration. Rather than relying on idealism alone, I would like you to consider concrete measures such as subsidies.

Furthermore, let me take this opportunity to urge executive staff to seize the initiative regarding collaboration so that each member of TMDU faculty and staff can find their blue bird close at hand.

The slogan "Join forces to protect patients and coworkers from COVID-19" takes its cue from "Join forces to create the future," the rallying cry I introduced upon taking office as TMDU president.

In my second year as TMDU president, I would like to advance hand in hand with you to "create the future" through interdisciplinary cooperation or across-the-board collaboration. For this, I request your wholehearted cooperation.