

Opinion

Life science progress and andrology development

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As requested by many participants, I would like to share with you the opening remark, which I made at the Third Asia-Pacific Forum on Andrology, in conjunction with the Celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of Asian Journal of Andrology, Nanjing, China, October 10, 2009. In my opening remark, I raised three questions about the development of Andrology, as well as highlighted three major trends of current progress of life science, which might be of great help in setting up our strategy for Andrology development in the coming years.

Distinguished guests, friends, ladies and gentlemen, good evening!

October is always the best month in China, it is the most beautiful month, and it is the month of bumper harvest. In October, autumn sky is clear and the air is bracing. In such a golden season, may I have the pleasure, on behalf of the Organizing Committee of the Forum and AJA, to express our sincere gratitude and warm welcome! Welcome to Nanjing, welcome to China, welcome to the third Asia-Pacific Forum on Andrology, in conjunction with the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of Asian Journal of Andrology!

As Confucius, the greatest Chinese ancient philosopher, said “Bosom friends coming from afar, deep joy filling in our hearts!” Today is really a great gathering of so many distinguished guests coming from all over the world. Ladies and gentlemen, why we, coming from different continents, coming from different countries, coming from different disciplines, are gathering here today in this hall, it is because we have our common language, we have our common mission, and we have our common goal. Andrology is our common language, and our common mission is helping men, no matter in developed or developing worlds, no matter young or old, to lead a healthy sexual and reproductive live, in order to reach our common goal: Reproductive Health for All. Many people here know Dr Bruno Lunenfeld, a member of AJA’s Advisory Committee, once he said “What is life? Life could be defined as a unique STD with 100% of mortality”, I believe all of us do feel his sense of humor, follow that, I tried to add my annex “What is our aim? Our aim is to reduce disease burden, to postpone ageing and death, as well as to upgrade our life quality, for which the promotion of sexual and reproductive health is definitely central and essential”.

According to WHO’s definition, good reproductive health implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. To this definition, ladies and gentlemen, I have to say that the current status of men’s health in Asia is far from satisfactory, you see, more than 60% of the world total population is living in Asia, that means, more than 60% of men on this planet is inhabiting in Asia, of course, they need male contraceptives, they need male infertility service, they need ED diagnosis and treatment, and they need prostate disease prevention and management, in a word, they do need Andrology. It is our sacred and bounden duty to help all these men to lead a healthy sexual and reproductive live.

Usually in the opening address, it is quite common to talk about key issues concerning the past, present and future. By speaking this way, it seems not so difficult to summarize what we have done before, to criticize what we are doing now and to look forward what needs to be done in the future. By speaking this way, at the opening

session of this Forum, let us make our common efforts trying to answer the following three important questions for Andrology:

First question: What could happen? To answer it, we need to give a fair-minded evaluation about our past and current good experiences and failure lessons in andrological research and service. It is really our great honor that His Excellency Dr David de Kretser and quite a few other key-note speakers will give us their excellent overviews at this Forum, and we are eager to listen to their presentation at this Forum;

Second question: What should happen? This requires us to make a comprehensive analysis for both our ability and health problems to be solved. People's need and demand is our starting point, and the development of ideal new health technologies is our end point. However, in the past, while focusing on health problems on one hand and health technologies on the other hand, we have been often ignoring the analysis and investigation of health determinants. So it is why the focus and theme of this Forum is "Environment, Life Style & Genetic/Epigenetic Factors and Men's Health";

Last question: What will happen? Obviously we know that it couldn't be a pure question for Andrology per se, because many more factors such as life and medical science progress, global warming and demographic changes, bioethics, economy and health policy involved extensively. In other words, we should put the thinking of Andrology development into a broader macro-background of the whole humanity society development and life science progress.

Herewith, I am trying to share with you three major trends of modern life science progress, which will be of great help in making our judgment and setting up our strategy for Andrology development in the future:

Number one: I call it as three Is in modern science, i.e. Innovation based on Interdisciplinary approach and Integration. As we know that interdisciplinary approach is becoming the major research strategy in current life science including Andrology. Traditionally, urologists and endocrinologists are the main pillar of Andrology working team. Now with the expansion of the scope and mission of today's Andrology, the urgent need is to involve more and more promising scientists working in other areas, such as cell and molecular biology, medical systems biology, genetics and epigenetics, biotechnology, bioinformatics, epidemiology, toxicology and social science into andrological research;

Number two: Integration and coordination among basic, transitional and translational research. The past successful experience in science development history tells us that the most creative insight and productive leads are most likely to emerge from a research team that is interdisciplinary and endeavors integration and coordination among basic, transitional and translational research, that means, integration and coordination between basic research and clinic studies; between laboratory investigation and epidemiological field work; between traditional medicine and modern medical science; between natural science and humanity social science. So the 'Bench to Bedside Research' is the only best way to develop new technologies for disease diagnosis and treatment, disease prediction and prevention as well as the new approaches to whole lifespan health intervention and health promotion;

Number three: 4P Medicine in the 21 Century. That means, Personalized Medicine, Predictive Medicine, Preventive Medicine and Public Participatory Medicine. The concept of 4P Medicine is also of utmost importance for Andrology research and service. Taking ageing men's health research and service as an example, we must take a new strategy based on 4P Medicine concept and philosophy, namely from conventional 'treatment-only mode' to a 'prevention and health promotion mode'. Hormone Replacement Therapy is only one of the solutions. New approaches to early diagnosis, risk assessment and prediction, prevention and life style education are being added to our armamentarium. Our new concept is that 'Ageing could be postponed and compressed into a short period', and our new philosophy is 'An ounce of timely prevention is worth a pound of cure', and 'to prevent the preventable and to delay the inevitable'.

In summary, to improve male reproductive health, we need more scientific projects, more presentations, more publications and more patents and products, all of these five Ps are outlets of our research. Even more importantly, we should dedicate ourselves to translate our research results into real outcomes, in terms of policy implication, health care provision and health promotion, in terms of public awareness and involvement, as well as political commitment, another five Ps, I call it as Ten Ps of medical research. We do need all these ten Ps.

Ladies and gentlemen, ten years ago, in the year of 1999, a group of foresighted Asian Andrologists came

together here in Nanjing and making a historical decision, i.e. to start publication of Asian Journal of Andrology with the aim of building an academic platform for scientific information exchange, in order to promote scientific communication and cooperation among scientists and doctors in Asia, as well as in the world. In the world today, there are three major Andrology academic centers, one in America, one in Europe, and one in Asia and the Pacific region. It is no doubt that the publication of AJA is a great momentum to increase the voice of Asian Andrologists in the world. Located in Asia, and facing the world, we, Asian Andrologists, we will, we must and we can make our own contribution to the development of Andrology of the world.

Time flies like an arrow! Ten years have passed. Ten years in the long river of human history is only a ripple. But the past ten years of AJA are ten years of initiation, ten years of dedication, ten years of exploitation and ten years of creation. It is no doubt that AJA is still a ten-year-old boy, but AJA is a young boy with great energy, with great enthusiasm, with great envision and with great expectation. At this historical moment, we will review the achievement of our yesterday, but more importantly, we will survey the challenges we are faced with today, as well as the opportunities we can catch tomorrow. After ten years of practice, we have reached a common consensus as follows:

Our Mission is helping men to lead a healthy sexual and reproductive live;

Our Vision is located in Asia, and facing the world;

Our Motto is improving constantly and seeking outstanding persistently;

I do remember a most famous statement made by Dr Pasteur, he said “Opportunities always meet prepared brain!” I would like to say that we have our brain well prepared, and we are ready now. In a word, our long-term aim is to dedicate our every effort to make AJA becoming a medical journal of international standard, with Asian characteristics and reflecting the strengths based on the solid foundation we have made in the past ten years. Our aim is fascinating and encouraging, but it is still a long way to reach there. I do believe that one day our long cherished dream will become reality. Ladies and gentlemen, let us shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm march forward, welcome the day! The work ahead is still formidable, but I do believe that our aim should be attained, our aim must be attained and our aim can certainly be attained!!!