

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE USJCMSP

The history of the U.S.–Japan Program is also a legacy of looking forward. For 40 years, the program has evolved to meet demands posed by the emergence of new diseases and other health problems in Southeast Asia, as well as to respond to opportunities offered by new technologies and research findings. Drs. Adel Mahmoud and Yoshifumi Takeda, the current chairs of the U.S. and Japan Delegations to the USJCMSP, respectively, appointed a special Task Force<sup>1</sup> that has been working since 2001 to refocus and revitalize the activities of the USJCMSP.

“Since it began, the U.S.–Japan Program has been committed to investigating the major infectious diseases and health problems of the region,” said Dr. Mahmoud in a June 2004 interview. Dr. Mahmoud became a member of the U.S. Delegation in 1994 and has served as its chair since 2001. “My major objective as the chair of the U.S. Delegation is to bring about some fundamental changes in the way the program is constructed and managed. The idea is that the more the program becomes designed around programmatic goals, the more the scientific pursuits of the program will be focused and judged around milestone criteria.”

The USJCMSP revitalization plan, as proposed by the Task Force, has three chief objectives: (1) to

refocus the goals of the USJCMSP in a way that ensures flexibility, as well as the ability to meet Panel/Board guidelines and Joint Committee requirements; (2) to strengthen the relationships between the Joint Committee and the joint Panels/Board; and (3) to test these new initiatives over a 3-year period in collaboration with several Panels. The Task Force also recommended that the Joint Committee identify several scientific areas and disciplines that can be emphasized in the revised goals of the Joint Panels/Boards. These might include emerging and re-emerging diseases, genomics, vaccines, and antimicrobial drug resistance. Suggested activities to refocus the goals of the U.S.–Japan Program include training, developing and sharing technologies to screen new drugs, coordinated studies in genomics and proteomics, and expanding the capacity to test new products in countries with a heavy burden of disease.

The Task Force recommendations were presented at the 39<sup>th</sup> U.S.–Japan Joint Committee Meeting in September 2003 in Princeton, New Jersey. The individual U.S. and Japanese Panels and Boards met in Kyoto in December 2004 (following the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the U.S.–Japan Program) to discuss how to implement the recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Task Force, appointed in 2001, included: Drs. Yoshifumi Takeda, Toshinobu Sato, Adel Mahmoud, John La Montagne, and Carole Heilman.