Introductory Remarks

Digestive cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the world and appropriate treatment of digestive cancer is a common subject for all gastroenterological surgeons. Digestive cancer itself is not essentially and pathologically different between countries or areas. However, there are differences in prevalence and pathogenesis between countries or areas, even in cases of the pathologically same cancer. The differences are on the basis of social and cultural differences such as environment, foods, customs, and so on. For example, *Helicobacter pylori* infection plays a pivotal role in the development of not only antral cancer but also cardiac cancer in Eastern countries. On the contrary in Western countries, especially in the US, gastroesophageal reflux with hyperacidity plays an important role in cardiac carcinogenesis. Hepatocellular carcinoma in Eastern countries is closely related to viral infection, but to excessive alcohol intake in Western countries. Accordingly, the diagnostic methods, surgical treatment and prevention of digestive cancer are different among countries. In addition, the health service system and socioeconomic reasons may bring about many differences.

Taken together, not only to discuss the essential and common knowledge of digestive cancer, but also to recognize the underlying social and cultural differences between countries or areas is likely to provide new and better approaches to the diagnosis, treatment and preven-

tion of digestive cancer. It is true that there are some differences in diagnostic methods, surgical treatment, chemotherapy and prevention of digestive cancer between Japan and Western countries. Mutual exchange of updated knowledge is a key for advances in basic and clinical research and for much better clinical results. From this viewpoint, this special issue of *Digestive Surgery* was planned and presents the current topics of surgical treatment of digestive cancer in Japan. This special issue will undoubtedly reduce the differences between countries.

Digestive Surgery is the collaborative official journal of the Japanese Society of Gastroenterological Surgery (JSGS). The JSGS consists of 22,000 active members and publishes monthly the *Japanese Journal of Gastroenterological Surgery* in Japanese. The annual congress of JSGS is held in July in which more than 2,500 scientific papers are presented and more than 6,000 members participate. In addition, many papers from the members of JSGS are submitted to *Digestive Surgery* every year.

On behalf of JSGS, I would like to express our deepest appreciation to the authors, the editors and editorial manager of *Digestive Surgery* for publication of this special issue. We are convinced that this special issue will contribute to further advances in the surgical treatment of digestive cancer in the world.

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