Preface

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the most common primary cancer of the liver. It causes yearly deaths estimated at 1,250,000 worldwide and is the seventh most frequent cancer in men. Furthermore, the number of patients with HCC keeps increasing worldwide.

Epidemiologically, persistent HBV/HCV infection is closely associated with the development of human HCC. Among HBV/HCV carriers, HCC usually develops in patients with chronic liver disease, such as chronic active hepatitis or cirrhosis. In other words, a hepatitis-related proliferative change, which is mainly sustained by repeated cycles of cell death and regeneration, appears to be important for HBV/HCV hepatocarcinogenesis. The accumulation of mutations, which are likely to occur during continuous cycles of cell division, may eventually transform some hepatocytes through a multi-stage process.

Carcinogenesis can be compared to an opened Japanese fan, because initiated cells grow in several directions and clinical tumors suggest that the edge of the fan has many gene abnormalities.

Our goal, then, should be directed to the reversion of the 'hypercarcinogenic state' to the 'normo- or hypocarcinogenic state' so as to hopefully prevent or at least postpone the development of HCC.

In order to promote co-operation between Japan and Asian countries, medical meetings of the Japan-Korea Liver Symposium (JKLS) were held consecutively in 2004 and 2005. The meeting in January 2004 at Kobe, Japan, focused on 'Prevention of occurrence and recurrence in human hepatocarcinogenesis', and in May 2005 on Cheju Island, South Korea, the meeting focused on 'Non A, non B, non C liver diseases in Korea and Japan'. Both meetings were very useful in clarifying the similarities and differences in liver diseases in Japan and Korea. The presentations made at the 2004 symposium were published in a special issue of *Intervirolgy* [vol. 48, No. 1, 2005].

At the third meeting of JKLS in November 2006 on Awaji Island, Japan, we discussed the subjects of 'Liver transplantation for virus related liver disease', and 'Liver cancer and tumor markers' in Asian countries including Japan and South Korea. This meeting is being called the joint symposium of the Second International Awaji Symposium.

We would like to make it an epoch-making symposium with the aim of contributing to the progress of hepatology. It is a great honor to participate in this symposium and to endeavor in making it a model of bridges of communication between Japan and Asian countries.

Okio Hino, Juntendo University