Introduction

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It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Satellite Symposium 'Present Situation of Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis in Asian Countries and the Possibility of MDR-TB Treatment by New Quinolones', which is being held as part of the 14th Asia Pacific Congress on Diseases of the Chest.

In recent years we have seen the emergence of a new spectrum of infectious diseases and an increasing problem of multidrug-resistant (MDR) organisms. Among the most significant of these are the resistant forms of tuberculosis (TB), which, if not prevented, will cause havoc throughout both the developing and developed world. Factors which have contributed to these developments include the worldwide explosion in population, coupled with increasing poverty and urban migration, as well as a rapid increase in international travel. These general factors mean that people are more at risk of exposure to many new and resurgent infectious diseases. In tandem with this increased risk of exposure is an increase in susceptibility seen in patients with AIDS and immune disorders. It is in this setting that the incidence of MDR-TB is growing and, if not curbed, it will impose a huge burden on health care. With the incidence of MDR-TB affecting the most productive age group its effects will be felt not just medically, but socially and financially. The crisis that

this poses cannot be overstressed. Therefore, this very timely satellite symposium on MDR-TB is of great importance. We need to share information with our medical colleagues throughout the world, as it is only through the transfer of such knowledge that we will be able to overcome this problem. Guidelines for treatment of TB in different settings need to be formulated and rapidly disseminated throughout the international medical community. Preventive strategies also need to be developed. Ways of dealing with MDR-TB need to be explored and the use of fluoroquinolones such as ofloxacin may be of great help as effective and less toxic second-line anti-TB agents.

This symposium is of great benefit in promoting awareness about the rising problems of TB and MDR-TB. Speakers will describe the situation in their countries and the solutions they are developing to combat the threat. The role of ofloxacin in this setting is being clarified, and results from therapeutic regimens using this important agent will be presented. We are privileged to have experts in TB and MDR-TB present their latest findings, thus providing an excellent overview of the TB threat facing the world today, and giving specific insights into the situation in a range of Asian countries.

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