Preface

The 9th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Gastroenterological Association (JGA) was organized by Prof. Toshifumi Hibi and held in Tokyo on January 25 and 26, 2013. During this conference, 1 forum, 12 workshops and 4 core symposia were held. The four themes of the core symposia were as follows: (1) strategies for diagnosis and treatment of gastrointestinal cancers, (2) inflammatory bowel disease, (3) functional gastrointestinal disorders and (4) advances in endoscopic diagnosis and treatment.

The articles published in the upcoming (2014) JGA Special Issue of *Digestion* represent the best presentations from the 9th Annual Meeting. The session chairpersons recommended a number of papers from their sections and, subsequently, the editorial committee of the JGA selected distinguished presentations from those recommendations and invited those authors to submit their papers for this issue. Five reviews and five original articles were accepted for final publication. All manuscripts were independently reviewed by two members of the JGA editorial committee.

Recent advances in endoscopic techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of gastrointestinal cancers in Japan have been remarkable. In this issue, a recent advance in the endoscopic detection of early esophageal squamous cell carcinoma is reviewed. Another article describes the outcomes of colorectal endoscopic submucosal dissection performed by trainee endoscopists in Japan. Molecularly targeted therapies for gastrointestinal cancers continue to be important areas of interest. Two original articles and one review on this issue describe current research topics in targeted therapies for gastric and colorectal cancers.

In addition, in this issue, one original and one review article focus on magnetic resonance imaging for the as-

essment of Crohn's disease. In the fields of inflammatory bowel disease, magnetic resonance imaging is expected to be a useful modality to not only decrease the frequency of colonoscopies, but also develop personalized therapeutic strategies. Progress in the medical treatment for corticosteroid-refractory ulcerative colitis is expected to decrease the number of cases that require surgery. Another article in this issue describes salvage therapy for patients with corticosteroid-refractory ulcerative colitis.

In the field of functional gastrointestinal disorders, proton pump inhibitor-refractory nonerosive reflux disease (NERD) is one of the major topics for research. One article in this issue describes proton pump inhibitor-refractory NERD accompanied by esophageal motor disorder. Researchers have recently speculated that microbiota dysfunction may be a link to a variety of diseases including irritable bowel syndrome, colorectal cancer and inflammatory bowel disease. Short-chain fatty acids produced by bacterial fermentation of dietary fiber are considered chemical mediators that can link the luminal information between microbiota and host. In this issue, the current research topic of short-chain fatty acid receptors in the colon is reviewed.

We believe this issue will provide useful information and promote further advances in basic and clinical gastroenterology. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all the authors and chairpersons for their contributions to this special issue.

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Associated Journal Committee of the JGA