

# A Brief History of the U.S.-Japan Malnutrition Panel: U.S.-Japan Cooperative Medical Science Program (43405C)

JAMES ALLEN OLSON

*Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011*

On January 18, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson and Prime Minister Eisaku Sato of Japan issued a joint communique recognizing their mutual concern for the health of all Asian peoples. To deal further with this concern, the U.S.-Japan Cooperative Medical Science Program was established during the same year. As a means of fostering the program in selected areas, six panels were established soon thereafter, one of which was the U.S.-Japan Malnutrition Panel. Currently, 10 such groups are active, each of which consist of five scientists from the United States and five from Japan. In the case of the Malnutrition Panel, counterparts work together in setting up conferences and in conducting other panel activities.

The initial focus of panel activities concerned malnutrition in Southeast Asia, including problems of vitamin A and iron deficiency, maternal and child health, and both behavior and work performance as a function of nutritional status. As a result of a detailed 5-year program review in 1985, however, increased emphasis was placed on nutritional issues of direct concern to the United States and Japan, namely, the assessment of nutritional states other than clinical deficiencies and the clarification of interrelationships between nutrient intake and various chronic diseases. Because dietary patterns and life-styles significantly differ between our two countries, comparative studies, both of experimental and epidemiological types, were fostered.

Currently, the five primary areas of the Malnutrition Panel are (i) nutrition, calcium, and osteoporosis; (ii) polyunsaturated fatty acids; (iii) obesity, including nutritional assessment; (iv) endogenous mediators; and (v) antioxidants in health and disease. These topics are reconsidered and appropriately modified each year in the light of current scientific findings. Panel symposia, which are held in alternative years in the United States and in Japan, are usually associated with some major international activity; for example, the symposium on osteoporosis and lipids, held in October 1990 in Kobe, Japan, was scheduled in conjunction with the International Congress on Obesity. Most symposia and conferences sponsored by the Panel are published in major scientific journals in the United States and Japan. Symposium papers and abstracts of the most recent conference, held in Bethesda, MD, on July 22–24, 1991, are being published in this issue of the *Proceedings of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine*.

Current members of the U.S. Malnutrition Panel are James A. Olson (chairperson), Barbara C. Hansen, Gerald Keusch, William E. Lands, and Lawrence G. Raisz, and of the Japan Malnutrition Panel are Fumimaro Takaku (chairperson), Takuo Fujita, Yuichiro Goto, Shuhei Kobayashi, and Takehiko Tanaka. Participating staff at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases are Van S. Hubbard, Nancy B. Cummings, Jay H. Hoofnagle, and Phillip Gorden.