The Taiwanese Dermatological Association and the Taiwanese Society for Investigative Dermatology: Brief History and Current Status

The formal clinical practice of dermatology in Taiwan was founded more than a century ago. In 1908, a department focusing on skin diseases was established in Taipei Hospital (later known as the National Taiwan University Hospital). In 1913, the chairman of the department, Obo Otohiko, was sent to Germany for 2 years to pursue further studies in skin diseases. In 1919, he became a professor and the chairman of the Department of Dermato-Urology of the Taipei Medical Specialty School (later known as National Taiwan University, School of Medicine). This event marked the beginning of dermatological science in Taiwan. Early dermatological research projects focused mainly on infectious skin diseases—in particular, on mycology, because Taiwan is located near tropical and subtropical regions. Until the end of World War II, the Taiwanese medical community, including the educational, clinical, and research fields, was under Japanese guidance, although this influence was not exclusive. Many missionaries and religious groups from Europe and North America had set up medical facilities throughout Taiwan. One of the best-known stories in Taiwanese medical history is about the English doctor David Landborough, who performed a life-saving skin graft on a child—using donor skin from his own wife. This selfless act inspired the establishment of the "Skin Graft for Love" foundation, and it stimulated the establishment of Taiwanese medical ethics.

In 1962, the dermato-urology department of the National Taiwan University Hospital was divided into two separate departments. Subsequently, the major medical facilities in Taiwan began to establish independent dermatology departments, which led to a flowering of dermatological science in Taiwan. The Taiwanese Dermatological Association was established in 1975. It holds a spring meeting in April and an annual meeting in November. This association now has 750 members, all of whom are board-certified dermatologists. In 1992, Yau-Chin Lu's memorial lectureship was established. This prestigious lectureship is awarded annually to an outstanding foreign dermatologist to promote cutting-edge research and international collaboration. In 2006, the Taiwanese Society for Investigative Dermatology was established. Both clinical physicians and basic researchers interested in the study of skin biology and skin disease have been invited to participate in this organization. Currently, the Society has more than 100 members who are actively engaged in dermatological research and who participate in international events. The establishment of these organizations has significantly impacted the development of dermatological science in Taiwan in terms of clinical practice, academic research, and international collaboration.

In 1983, the Taiwanese Dermatological Association published the first issue of *Dermatologica Sinica*, which began as a quarterly journal and is now a bimonthly publication. In 2008, *Dermatologica Sinica* was included in the Science Citation Index Expanded. This certainly will lead the dermatological community in Taiwan to pursue further academic excellence, and it is a welcome recognition of its achievements.

There are 10 medical schools in Taiwan. Each year, the National Department of Health in Taiwan allows 30–35 physicians to become board-certified dermatologists. With 1,400 medical graduates per year, residency in dermatology has become a highly competitive career choice. With the recruitment of top medical graduates into the field, many of whom have gone abroad for further study and then returned to pursue careers as physician–scientists, dermatological science has grown

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exponentially. Five main research topics, including chronic arsenic poisoning (Yu *et al*., 2002, Liao *et al*., 2004), vitiligo (Yu *et al*., 2003; Lan *et al*., 2006), basal cell carcinoma (Jee *et al*., 2004; Chu *et al*., 2007), atopic diseases (Wang *et al*., 1996), and drug-induced blistering diseases (Chung *et al*., 2008), have been advanced by research performed in Taiwan. Moreover, dermatologists in Taiwan are actively involved in international collaborative research projects, including studies on arsenic poisoning and vitiligo. In the future, the dermatological community aims to pursue more collaborative projects with Taiwanese industry, including the photovoltaic industry, and to perform relevant translational studies that introduce more efficient phototreatment modalities for our patients. Furthermore, as the geriatric population continues to increase globally, the use of relevant modalities for regenerative and preventive medical purposes will be invaluable to society.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors state no conflict of interest.

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