

Toward a New Health-care System



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Recent developments in medical treatment have considerably extended the life expectancy of Japanese society. As a result, the number of people who are suffering from diseases, such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, as they age is increasing; thus the cost of medical care is rising every year. To cope with such situation, a growing understanding has emerged that it is important to achieve a society in which people can enjoy a long and healthy life; consequently, medical care is shifting its focus from curing certain illnesses to preventing them.

Moreover, the development of information technology has made it possible to share health records beyond the boundary of time and space. The integration of many individual pieces of medical information, which were once scattered among several medical facilities, is now within sight. In addition, the human genome project has spurred a rapid development in genome technology, which is

revealing a close relationship between our risk of developing cancer or other living practice-caused diseases and our individual gene information.

These changes will lead future medical treatment into three totally different areas; from a treatment based on average data to that based on specific individual data; from depending on an early detection to prevention on the basis of a person's liability to suffer a certain illness; and to a minimally invasive examination in consideration of a patient's quality of life.

Under these new circumstances, Hitachi has decided to focus our research efforts into the following three most promising fields: health examination based on individual gene information, systems for more accurate detection of a disease, and appropriate therapy which causes patients as little suffering as possible. Hitachi will spare no effort to take on new challenges in these fields.