NOTES in Japan: Updates on Activity and Current Status of Japan NOTES

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The Japan Gastroenterological Endoscopy Society (JGES) and Japan Society for Endoscopic Surgery (JSES) organized a joint committee on NOTES for the purpose of safe and efficient development of NOTES.

Simultaneously, the activity of “Japan Working Group for NOTES (JWNOTES)” started in 2005. JGES and JSES formed Japan NOTES in 2007, to expand participation in the working group. The first annual meeting of Japan NOTES was held on November 18th, 2007 and the second one was held on September 6th, 2008. Up to now, 110 institutional members have been participating in Japan NOTES, including almost all Medical University Hospitals and National Centers. Additionally, 11 major memberships for supporting company have joined.

White paper in Japan NOTES has been published in May, 2008, in which challenges for clinical application of NOTES are described, including qualification for Japan NOTES, guideline for animal study, central IRB for NOTES study, multi-center study to solve several barriers for clinical application of NOTES, registry system for NOTES study, and regulation for studies with supporting company. Especially, a strict registration system with clear rules has been established regarding for not only prospective human studies, but also animal research studies with supporting companies. So far, the review board of Japan NOTES has evaluated the protocol.

In Japan, we endoscopists have a lot of experiences and more than 20 year’s history of EMR and ESD. Now, ESD has become a standard first-line treatment for early stage cancers in the stomach and the esophagus, and has also become a therapeutic option for lesions in the colon. NOTES technology has been developed, based on ESD technology, such as various accessories for flexible endoscopy, R-scope, Endo SAMURAI, eagle claw for sewing, and double T-bar device for suturing. The key challenges to the next steps would be the development of suturing devices and a multi-tasking platform. The double T-bar suturing device (Brace Bar) has been developed on the basis of the tissue anchoring technique, and will soon be commercially available. This device consists of a pucture needle and a suture unit. The suture unit has two metal tags at the distal end of bifurcated nylon thread. In addition, we have developed the endo-therapy device, EndoSAMURAI, which was designed by Olympus Medical Systems Corp. New technologies using these devices will be presented in the lecture with the movie. Up to now, human studies on NOTES have been done in 4 institutes in Japan.

We hope that Japan NOTES will contribute to development of this new technology and introduction of NOTES into clinical practice in a safe and responsible way, in conjunction with other organizations, such as NOSCAR, NOSLA, EURO-NOTES, and AP-NOTES.