

2019 World Alliance Forum in San Francisco



On October 29th and 30th, 2019, thought leaders, influencers, and distinguished scientists from the US, Japan, and beyond, gathered for the 2019 World Alliance Forum in San Francisco (“WAFSF”) titled “Healthcare Game Changers: Emerging Trends and Technologies.” This was the seventh annual conference co-organized by the Alliance Forum Foundation (“AFF”) and the government of Japan to further the commercialization of new technologies to advance healthcare and to support the airing of new ideas and the formation of new collaborations. The ultimate goal of WAFSF is to create a society where everyone leads a healthy life – both mentally and physically- until his or her last moment. The three ingredients for achieving this goal are (i) innovations in technology that enables a full, healthy life even after a serious accident, (ii) innovations in policy that encourage scientific and technical advances and accelerate access to them and finally (iii) an ecosystem where technology and policy innovations thrive. The 2019 WAFSF showcased all of these in sessions that featured some of the most sought-after speakers and KOL’s in their fields.



Left: Dr. Hiroto Izumi (Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Japan). Right: Amb. George Hara (Alliance Forum Foundation)

Ambassador. George Hara started the first day of the conference with a keynote speech which highlighted how Public Interest Capitalism is of fundamental importance to bettering global health and welfare. His message was clear: the current model of capitalism which is heavily driven by speculative, short-term shareholder interests is failing and harmful to the sustainability of innovation ecosystems worldwide. The objectives of corporations should distribute created values not only to shareholders but also to customers, employees, suppliers and communities. It is critical for companies to reinvest for long-term growth by supporting innovation. Innovation is a long process in which cross-border, cross-industry, and cross-sector collaborations are essential. It is only through innovation that society can extend health-span.

Other policy makers spoke as well and shared their visions for better health. These included **Dr. Hiroto Izumi**, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Japan; **Mr. Kazumi Nishikawa**, Director, Healthcare Industries Division, Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry of Japan; **Mr. Robert Klein**, Chairman, Americans for Cures; **Dr. Shannon Muir**, California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research; **Mr. Stephen J. Metzger**, Board Member, RAND Health; **Dr. Regis Kelly**, Director, California Institute for Quantitative Biosciences (QB3); **Ms. Dana Dornsife**, Founder & Board Chair, Lazarex Cancer Foundation; **Dr. Jonathon Thomas**, Chair, Governing Board, California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (“CIRM”); **Dr. Deepak Srivastava**, President, Gladstone Institute; **Dr. Mark J. Ratain**, Leon O. Jacobson Professor of Medicine, The University of Chicago; **Mr. Patrick Y. Yang**, Former EVP of Technical Operations, Juno Therapeutics and many others.



From left: Dr. Deepak Srivastava (Gladstone Institute), Mr. Robert Klein (Americans for Cures), Dr. Shannon Muir (California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research), and Ms. Elissa Prichep (World Economic Forum)

Numerous ideas were shared and through this vetting, these ideas have the potential to effect change. Basic “truths” were noted such as: “Poverty makes people sick, sickness makes people poor” (Regis) and “Our lives get longer, [resulting in] more old people, Old people get sick, [resulting in] medical costs soar[ing].” (Regis).

The 2019 WAFSF, however, did not focus solely on society’s shortcomings. Speakers, were asked to propose solutions and there were no shortages of ideas to come. It was noted that access to medicines needed to be made available to all and the Lazarex Cancer Foundation was working toward that end with funding to the poor. Others suggested that the needs of family care-givers be addressed in national health programs, that more cross-disciplinary research in aging be supported, that curriculums include the biology of aging and even that an institute for healthy aging be established in California. In addition, like last year, emphasis on the need to share data was also highlighted.



Joint Declaration for Cancer Eradication in the US & Japan

From left: Mr. Toshio Nakami (Cancer Eradication Summit), Dr. Mark J. Ratain (The University of Chicago), Mr. Jim Sergi (CSSi LifeSciences), and Amb. George Hara (Alliance Forum Foundation)

The conference also showcased an encouraging array of emerging technologies and companies. Attendees were presented with many new advances in medicine and even learned of how the industrialization of space may one day help deliver on the promise of extending health span. A representative from the U.S. International Space Station National Lab spoke, as did researchers and companies supporting micro-gravity research. The industrialization of space is bringing new learnings and expanded capabilities in a number of areas including tissue chips, organoids, flow chemistry and disease modeling with the hope of accelerating biomarker discovery and potential new drug and cell therapy options for patients with neurodegenerative disorders. Dr. Regis Kelly led a follow up panel from last year to provide updates on research relating to aging.

Cancer was also a focus of the conference with a number of CEO’s and renowned researchers presenting the latest innovations in cancer research and drug development. Next generation technologies including the use of natural killer cells, virus and antibody conjugates were discussed. Following the end of the session a Joint Declaration for Cancer Eradication in the US and Japan was issued. Companies also shared their advances in regenerative medicine and gene therapy.

In addition, for the first time ever at WAFSF, and with great success, a pitch contest was held among a number of startup companies. Five finalists that were previously selected provided a short presentation to a panel of judges that ultimately selected Xcell Biosciences, a novel cell therapy development platform company, as the winner and Savonix, a cost-effective mobile cognitive assessment platform company, as the runner-up.



Pitch Contest Winner Announcement.
Left: Dr. Toshio Fujimoto (iPARK).
Right: Mr. Brian Feth (Xcell Biosciences)

Following upon the very positive feedback from attendees and participants, WAFSF will continue. The next conference will be held on US Pacific Time 4PM ~ 6PM November 5th, 9th, 12th, 17th, 19th, 2020.