



Fighting disease, poverty and prejudice

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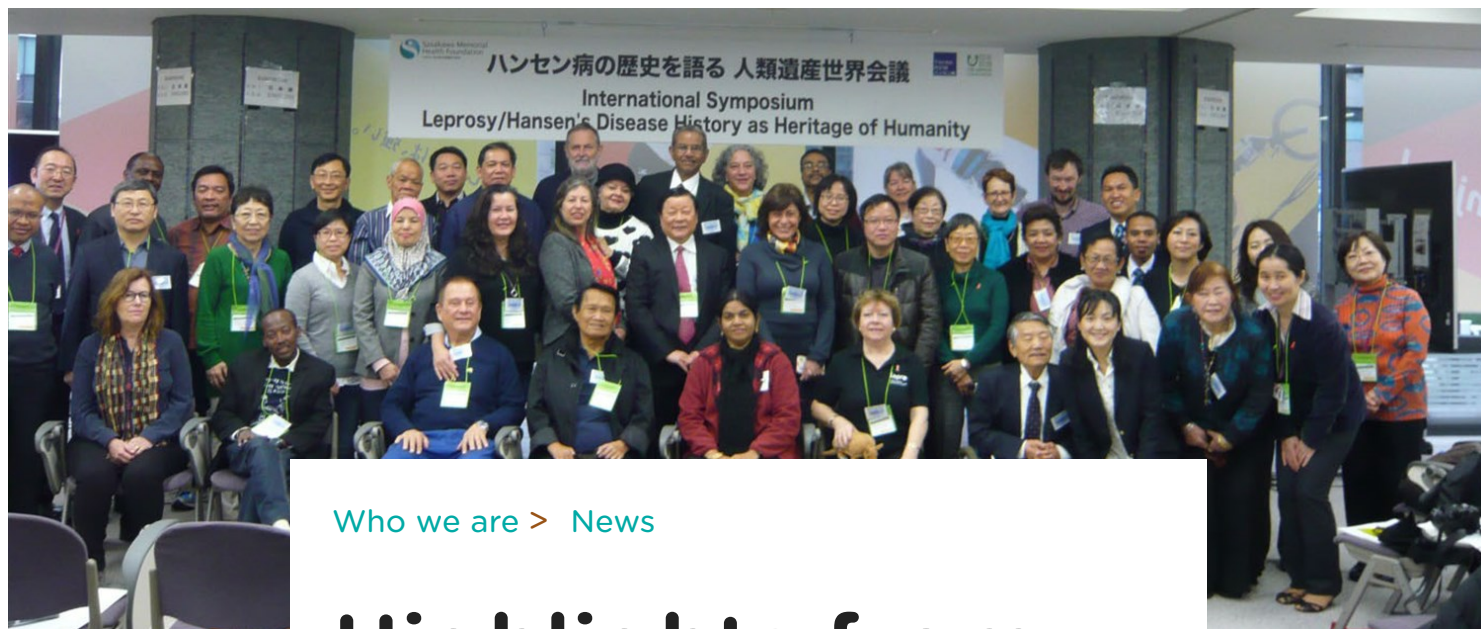
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Highlights from the trip

Apart from the Symposium sessions, there were a few highlights to this trip that need to be mentioned. One, for example, was passing Mount Fuji on the way to the Museum on the first day.

After our day at the National Hansen's Disease Museum, we rushed to a reception at the Imperial Hotel, arriving - since there had been no time to stop at the hotel to change - in jeans at an



extremely upmarket venue! The reception was introduced by Dr Etsuko Kita, Chair of the Sasakawa Memorial Health foundation, dressed resplendently in a beautiful red kimono. We spent a wonderful two hours at the reception, after which we returned to the hotel to get some well-deserved sleep.

On the way to the reception, Kay Yamaguchi from the Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation also gave me a sneak preview of the new [History of Leprosy website](#) as I had contributed to it, which was unveiled the next day to everyone else - resulting in gasps all around me!

Another highlight was the morning talk of 28 January by the animation film maker Mr Hayao Miyazaki, who has a great association with the Museum. He was joined for discussion by the three men we met at the Museum the day before. The late morning we were shown Mr Miyazaki's film, 'My Neighbour Totoro,' which was a delightful film in Japanese with English subtitles.

Lastly, I do also need to mention the delicious food that we were served during the Symposium. At the reception on Wednesday evening, the food was amazing and the Sasakawa staff were faultless, ensuring that everyone had food and drinks, and making sure that no-one was left on their own. I also had some delightful dinners in Tokyo – one very cosmopolitan evening with a Brit, a New Zealander, an Australian, an Indian, a Korean, and a Japanese member, and another one with Dr Pedro Torres Muñoz from Fontilles.

It was fantastic to meet up with like-minded people both old and new: Dr Jo Robertson, Kay Yamaguchi, Jonathan Lloyd Owen (editor of the WHO Goodwill Ambassador's Newsletter for the Elimination of Leprosy), Dr Benjamin Mayor Foulkes, Dr John Manton, and many more! Networking is really what it is all about, next to what each of us can do to ensure that the wonderful international archive on the history of leprosy is completed and shared.

Conclusion

Perhaps one of the most impressive things for me about this conference was seeing those with the physical disabilities brought about by leprosy being treated the same as everyone else in a very good hotel. It was not that long ago when they would not have been allowed in the city, let alone in a prestigious hotel eating and drinking with everyone else, and they certainly would not have been afforded the courtesy and public platform that they have enjoyed at this conference – a wonderful step forward in its own right!

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