

**Speech at the UK-Japan Regenerative Medicine Symposium
by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi
at the Embassy of Japan
on Tuesday 8 September 2015**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am delighted to welcome all of you to today's UK-Japan Regenerative Medicine Symposium.

Regenerative medicine is the Holy Grail for medical treatment, making what was once unimaginable into a reality. Indeed, I am already looking forward to the day when some of my body parts can be reproduced: the slipped disc in my back every time I feel pain or my ever-shrinking brain as I find myself becoming increasingly forgetful! But in all seriousness, such treatments might one day become a reality thanks to regenerative medicine and will provide a literally life-changing opportunity for those with incurable diseases and severe injuries.

The area of regenerative medicine is a hot topic in both Japan and the UK. Firstly, the 2012 Nobel Prize awarded to Professor Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University for his work on 'iPS cells' highlighted the significant efforts Japan has been making in the field of regenerative medicine. Professor Yamanaka was inspired by the earlier work of Dr John B. Gurdon of Cambridge University, with whom the prize was shared.

Secondly, given impetus by such significant achievements, research and development in the field of regenerative medicine is making further progress as part of our countries' national health strategies. In Japan, there is a strong focus on medical research under Prime Minister Abe's government in order to enhance the quality of life in an age of increasing longevity, and regenerative medicine is one of the key components of this strategy.

Today we welcome a senior director from AMED (the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development), which has been established to bring together and better integrate the medical research efforts made by different government organisations. The agency was formed in April this year and we hope that its work will bear fruit.

We are also joined today by a prominent academic, Professor Yoshiki Sawa from Osaka University, as well as representatives from Helios and CellSeed, cutting-edge companies who are leading the way in achieving genuine practical results in their respective fields of regenerative medicine. On the other hand, from the UK side we have with us today eminent professors from Imperial College London, the University of Manchester and

King's College London. Also taking part are representatives from the Cell Therapy Catapult, a unique organisation that supports collaboration in clinical trials between industry and academia, which is of great interest to Japan.

Having presentations from such distinguished scholars and industry representatives regarding the latest achievements in Japan and the UK will, I am sure, highlight the potential for even further research collaboration to flourish among Japanese and British institutions.

Furthermore, we are pleased to welcome today representatives of the regulatory authorities from both countries, as their presence gives us an opportunity to consider how innovation in the regulatory field can help to support ~~the~~ research and development activities. In this regard the Japanese Government has revised the regulations on regenerative medicine with a view to creating the most favourable research environment, with considerable success.

Meanwhile, there have been many discussions surrounding research on fertilised human embryos. In this controversial area, too, Japan and the UK have a lot in common in the pursuit of their research and regulatory strategies.

I am convinced that Japan and the UK can lead the way in this challenging field of science. When Professor Yamanaka received his Nobel Prize in 2012, he said that he "sincerely wishes to help make this technology a clinical reality in the future". I sincerely hope that this symposium will contribute to accelerating the progress towards achieving his wishes.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the Find A Better Way charity. Today, we are honoured by the presence of its founder, the football legend Sir Bobby Charlton, who has been a great friend of Japan and is a recipient of the Order of the Rising Sun. As will be explained later, his charity has been a great supporter of regenerative medicines. I trust that his presence will help to make today's gathering prove to be an historic occasion for Japan-UK collaboration in this important field.

Thank you very much.