

## 2001 Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry-International: Dr. Fumio Yamashita

**Presented by Dushanka V. Kleinman, DDS, MScD**

It is a distinct honor that we are able to present the 2001 Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry-International to Dr. Fumio Yamashita posthumously for his many achievements in preventive dentistry and community efforts. Today we have the pleasure of having Dr. Yamashita's wife with us to receive the award.

This is an award that recognizes our international members who have made significant contributions toward improving the public's oral health through implementation of community-based programs and teaching. We are appreciative to the Colgate-Palmolive Company, which generously underwrites this award.

Dr. Yamashita's efforts toward preventing dental caries have been remarkable. His work has contributed so much to so many.

Dr. Fumio Yamashita was a general dentist in Miyazaki, Japan. He also was a public health practitioner par excellence. Japan has the highest prevalence of dental caries among industrialized nations. A major reason for this high caries experience is because there is no community water fluoridation and, until recently, relatively little use of fluoride toothpaste. Dr. Yamashita, a member of AAPHD for many years, did more to bring caries prevention to Japan than any other single individual.

Until last summer, Dr. Yamashita practiced dentistry in Miyazaki. At the same time, he organized the community—business people, housewives,

retirees, children, his parents, and his wife—to teach them about the value of fluorides to prevent dental caries. With his own funds, he provided fluoride mouthrinse materials and education to all the children and their families in his prefecture. He wrote stories and plays about bacteria, teeth, and fluoride and convinced adults to perform these plays with elaborate costumes throughout his prefecture. No one could help knowing about "Star Fluoride" and how it prevents tooth decay. He wrote and published a bi-monthly newsletter to provide current updates of the implementation of community water fluoridation in other countries as well as activities of his organization. He also sent many of his colleagues from Japan to the United States to learn about primary prevention and how to implement community water fluoridation. He wrote numerous letters to newspapers calling for community water fluoridation. In addition, he tried to convince the Japanese Dental Association and the Ministry of Health to support water fluoridation. He was not successful because many dentists fear that their incomes would be dramatically reduced, and the Ministry of Health felt obligated to support the dentists.

He decided to go public. He wrote and published a book, "Sayonara Dental Caries," and distributed it to the press, decision makers, and the public. He told everyone in all modes of communication that the two greatest barriers to community water fluoridation in Japan were the Japanese Dental As-

sociation and the Ministry of Health.

He created extensive interest in fluoridation and organized a big conference in Tokyo for last November, primarily for decision makers and the press. One community has agreed to fluoridate. More are expected to follow. And, most importantly, the Ministry of Health officially changed its policy on community water fluoridation.

Unfortunately, Dr. Yamashita died in July of last year. He was a very young man who dedicated his life to preventing dental caries. His second book, written for the public about the use of fluorides in preventing tooth decay, was published shortly after his untimely death. Although Fumio died, his wife, parents, and many, many dentist followers are continuing his work. He richly deserves this award, not only for what he has done, but also because it will encourage his followers to continue their very bold efforts. Many of his followers also are members of AAPHD.

Mrs. Yamashita, please accept this heartfelt award on behalf of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry. We are pleased to have this opportunity to honor your husband and his many achievements.

P.S. He also traveled to China and underwrote the use of fluorides in that country, as well. Moreover, he and his wife designed and paid for portable bathtubs to take into the homes of elderly or handicapped persons. This activity also was, and is, being done using community organization.