Sportology – an emerging field

Sportology, a field pioneered by PROFESSOR HIDEOKI OGAWA, CEO OF JUNTENDO UNIVERSITY in Tokyo, integrates neuroscience, philosophy, and sociology to examine the links between playing or watching sports and health benefits.

The concept of sportology was developed by Juntendo University 30 years ago to provide a scientific framework that could encompass the different areas of sports science. It’s a relatively uncharted field, and discoveries in sportology could have long-term benefits for society, including advances in disease prevention and medical treatments.

Before 2011, more than 110 academic medical associations had been established in Japan. However, none of these were based on ideas that originated in Japan. Recognizing Sportology’s potential, Juntendo University worked to build wider interest, organizing the first, second, and third Sportology Pre-congresses. In 2011, the creation of the International Academy of Sportology was made possible through the leadership of Opgaawa, CEO of Juntendo University (bottom right, at centre). In March of 2011, Juntendo University (bottom left, pictured in 2016) hosted the first Congress of Sportology, which was scheduled for April 2011. The sportology congress was lucky to avoid the disaster, however the destruction left people throughout Japan distraught. Sports, however, helped improve the outlook of many people, giving the Japanese population a sense of hope.

FIFA World Cup — a victory that, however the destruction left lucky to avoid the disaster, Japan, since 1875 (left, pictured in 2016). Originally a medical school, the university now has five faculties: medicine, health and sports science, health care and nursing, health science and nursing, and international liberal arts, the last founded to further the university’s international spirit in 2019. The current dean is Professor Eiki Kominami (above, at left). Each faculty has its roots in the medical school and is founded on the idea of improving society’s overall health. The Faculty of Health and Sports Science, for example, was established more than 60 years ago and draws upon Juntendo’s impressive medical capabilities to pursue world-class research into athletes, and sports- and health-related topics.

The sportology congress: bringing international specialists together

The Third Congress of the International Academy of Sportology, due to be held in October 2017, will highlight the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympics, with a focus on the latter. It aims to bring international researchers together to discuss how advances in sportology may contribute to a better society.

A number of Olympic-focused collaborative research projects focusing on sports, exercise, and disease prevention are already underway between Juntendo and organizations with shared interests. One project is being developed in association with the government’s Japan Sports Agency (JSA). Led by JSA’s inaugural commissioner, Daichi Suzuki (left, at right) — a Juntendo University Faculty of Health and Sports Science alumnus and Olympic gold medalist — this venture will focus on ways to increase sports participation rates in Japan from the current 40–50%, to 65% by 2020. Another project will aim to learn more about the relationship between fitness, strength, and brain function in elderly populations.

Through talking about these initiatives during the Sportology Congress, Juntendo researchers hope to contribute to the legacy of the 2020 Olympic games and to spreading ideas that will make society as a whole both mentally and physically healthier.

Juntendo University acknowledges that the field of sportology and its potential contribution to society are bigger than the university itself. Discoveries will require collaborations between many people with different backgrounds and perspectives. With this in mind, the goal of the third congress is to bring together experts with different backgrounds to generate new connections and discoveries in this exciting, emerging field.