



Greetings from the JASTS President,

I am Yoshihiro Yoshihara from RIKEN Center for Brain Science. I have been appointed as the 10th President of The Japanese Association for the Study of Taste and Smell (JASTS), succeeding Dr. Takaki Miwa. I look forward to working with you over the next three years.

JASTS was established in 1991 as the predecessor of the "Taste and Smell Symposium" that started in 1967. The society is composed of many researchers of taste and smell who belong to universities, research institutes, companies, hospitals, etc. in Japan, with the aim of advancing the wide-ranging research on the science of taste and smell. The society also leads the world's taste and olfaction research in collaboration with the Association for Chemoreception Sciences (ACheMS) in the United States and the European Chemoreception Research Organization (ECRO) in Europe.

My fascination with the world of olfaction began in 1989. After completing my doctoral thesis at Kyoto University Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, I became a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Neuroscience at Osaka Bioscience Institute, and Dr. Kensaku Mori (then Deputy Director) was conducting his experiments next to my bench. Dr. Mori, who had already become one of the world's leading scientists in the field of olfaction, carefully taught me the basics of brain science, electrophysiology, and neuroanatomy, while also including me in the discussion of his experiment on "odor maps in the olfactory bulb," which had not yet been published at the time. Since Richard Axel and Linda Buck published their paper on the discovery of olfactory receptor genes in 1991, two years before that, I had the good fortune of secretly learning the solution to a fundamental question for olfaction researchers: "How is smell information represented in the brain?". Also, in 1991, I visited the laboratory of Prof. Gordon Shepherd and Richard Axel, two of the greats in the field of olfaction research, and this was also the beginning of a shocking journey into the depths of olfaction research. Ten years later, in 2001, I participated for the first time in the JASTS annual meeting held in Kochi. At the reception, I was surrounded by Dr. Hideto Kaba, Dr. Yuzo Ninomiya, and Dr. Kazushige Touhara, who forcefully invited me to join the association. At that time, I never dreamed that I would be appointed as the president 20 years later.

Now, the COVID-19 pandemic that began last spring has drastically changed the world situation and our lives. A state of emergency was declared, and our research activities were extremely difficult due to telecommuting and staggered work hours, and our academic activities were also greatly affected. The 18th ISOT (International Symposium on Olfaction and Taste) scheduled for last summer in Portland, OR, and the 54th JASTS Annual Meeting scheduled in Kashiwa, Chiba, Japan, could not be held onsite and had to be held online. However, thanks to the tremendous efforts of the organizers, the advantages of holding the conferences online were maximized, and the conferences turned out to be wonderful events that will remain in both records and memories. It also served as a touchstone for considering how future conferences should be organized. All the steering committee meetings of JASTS were also held online, and we found that in-depth discussions could be held efficiently enough even through the screen, saving everyone's precious time, travel labor, and business trip expenses.

In another way, COVID-19 has had a great impact on us taste and smell researchers. The symptom of loss of taste and smell of food in many infected people has increased the public's interest in taste and smell research. This has strengthened the link between clinical and basic research in the field of taste and olfaction, and has reaffirmed the importance of disseminating information and returning research results to society. Thus, not only negative effects but also positive aspects exist that COVID-19 has brought about, and we hope that for some time to come, we will be able to take advantage of these benefits and return to holding on-site conferences and resuming face-to-face discussions and collaborative research.

For the next three years, we will focus on the following four pillars: 1) fostering young researchers, 2) promoting fusion and collaboration in different fields of taste and smell research, 3) internationalization of the society, and 4) dissemination of information from the society to public. We are determined to manage the society with the aim of contributing not only to the field of taste and olfaction, but also to the development of life science and medicine. We look forward to your cooperation and support, and your active participation in the activities of the society.

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Yoshihiro Yoshihara

