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THE EDITOR'S CORNER

Extending a Hand

Those of us in Southern California have a close relationship with the orthodontists of Japan. Many of them belong to the Southern California component of the Angle Society, and all are valued colleagues. There is a large contingent of our Japanese friends at every major Southern California orthodontic meeting, whether it's the Angle Society or the Pacific Coast Society of Orthodontists. The Japanese orthodontists always present extraordinarily well-managed cases, and their research projects are interesting and clinically applicable. But some of my most treasured memories are of the great times we've had after hours, simply enjoying our camaraderie.

On Friday, March 11, at 2:46 p.m. local time, a massive earthquake, measured at 8.9-9.0 on the Richter scale, struck off the northeast coast of Japan. In Tokyo, hundreds of miles away, skyscrapers shook violently, and workers scrambled into the streets for safety. More than 50 aftershocks followed, seven of which were at least 6.3 on the Richter scale—the size of the quake that struck New Zealand on Feb. 22. Subsequently, a huge tsunami crashed through Japan's eastern coastline, sweeping buildings, boats, cars, and people miles inland.

It is almost impossible to imagine the scale of devastation caused by this catastrophe. Entire villages were carried away, along with thousands of inhabitants. But of all the news accounts that appeared worldwide, CNN's story of a nurse in Rikuzentakata is the one that touched me the most. This nurse described the haunting cries of the patients when the tsunami hit her hospital, as she had to decide between trying to save her patients and saving herself. She rescued as many as she could before seeking higher ground. Of the 51 hospitalized patients, doctors and nurses were unable to move 12, who drowned in their beds. Dr. Mikihiro Ishiki, a medical director at the hospital, said that "10 of my staff also died with the patients." On top of this human tragedy, he lost the hospital he proudly called his home. As doctors ourselves, with patients and staff members whom we cherish, our hearts go out to those medical workers and others like them in this period of enormous loss.

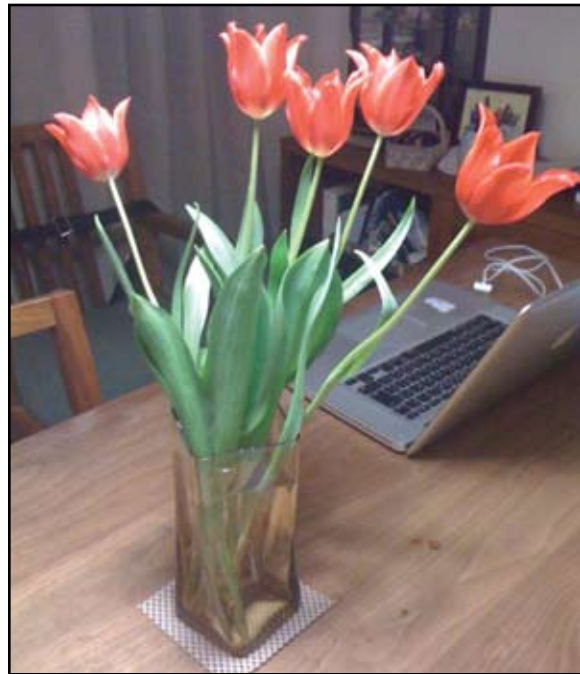
JCO has many readers in Japan, and all of them remain in our thoughts and prayers. It was with deep concern that I e-mailed my close friend and colleague, Dr. Masatada Koga,

our Contributing Editor in Japan, to inquire about his well-being and that of his home and family. Masa reports that things are relatively normal in Tokyo, where he lives and practices. Although he felt substantial shaking at the time of the quake, there was little actual damage in the city. Still, he says, some Tokyo residents have been rushing to hoard food, water, and basic supplies. He also reports that, according to the Japanese press, the loss of life from the earthquake and tsunami are substantially greater than what the international media are reporting, with local estimates approaching 20,000 dead. Masa also notes that four or five of the 15 nuclear power plants in the area have lost structural integrity and are considered dangerous—again, substantially more damage than has been reported by the world press.

Dr. Junji Sugawara, lead author of the Case Report on “Non-Surgical Correction of Skeletal Open Bite” in this issue, teaches with his co-authors Zaher Aymach, Hiroshi Nagasaka, and Hiroshi Kawamura at Tohoku University in Sendai, the city at the center of the affected area on Japan’s east coast. A few days after the earthquake he wrote to his colleagues, including our Associate Editor, Dr. Ravindra Nanda, that, although many were leaving the area, his family and community commitments would keep him there: “. . . I have to stay at Sendai while praying God for a disaster no longer spreading. Attached photograph is a vase with tulip on my table. It did not fall down in spite of a strong earthquake. . . it is miraculous tulip indeed. We bear this catastrophe like this tulip persistently and wish to recover as soon as possible.”

Dr. Sugawara later e-mailed his colleagues: “It has been an overwhelming experience, but I am very touched by all your support and encouragement upon this unprecedented disaster. However, many of those who have lost their homes and families continue to face great sufferings and challenges of recovery. . . . I feel that it is my responsibility as a survivor of this calamity to help those who are more affected regain hope and courage. Because of the many offers of support I received, I am attempting to coordinate donations for the sake of better restoring health to this greatly afflicted city.

“I would like to ask for your continued contributions to reputable organizations in your coun-



try, such as the Red Cross or UNICEF. Alternatively, you may consider ‘Save Sendai 311’, an organization I have started to distribute funds with greater flexibility. . . directly to smaller groups as their needs arise.” For details on how to support Dr. Sugawara’s effort, e-mail him at j.sugawara@me.com or follow the link on the JCO homepage.

The global orthodontic community is a tightly knit group. Having attended meetings around the world and maintained friendships and correspondence with orthodontists on every continent but Antarctica, I have always been impressed with the familiarity we all feel when we gather together, from Los Angeles to Berlin to Johannesburg to Tokyo. Although it may be a cliché, there’s no doubt in my mind that we, the orthodontists of the world, constitute one big family. And as in any family, we each feel the pain of the others in times of catastrophe and hardship. At the time of this writing, the AAO is putting together a plan to work with the Japan Orthodontic Society and Japan Dental Association to aid those who have been affected by this horrendous earthquake and tsunami. We can also contribute individually to the Red Cross or similar disaster-relief agencies. To all of our Japanese friends and colleagues: We know that you will overcome this crisis with the dignity and honor so characteristic of your great land and culture. We will not hesitate to help in whatever ways we can. RGK