

Preface

During the last 40 years, we have experienced, throughout Japan, a number of severe outbreaks of arsenic poisoning among industrial workers and the general population. These incidents were, in part, due to arsenic contamination in milk, soy sauce and well-water. In 1955, massive outbreaks of poisoning due to arsenic contamination in powdered milk resulted in 12 131 victims, including 130 fatalities. Numerous cases of arsenic poisoning from mines at Toroku and Matsue and from a refinery plant at Saganoseki were also reported. Thus arsenic poisoning became one of the most important problems in industrial hygiene as well as in environmental pollution. These experiences urged and promoted basic and clinical research in arsenic in Japan. Therefore, a nationwide research network on arsenic was elaborated as the Japanese Arsenic Scientists' Society (JASS) in 1983. At that time, Professor Noburu Ishinishi (Kyushu University) as President, Professor Takeaki Kikuchi (Tokyo University of Fisheries) and Professor Shozo Toda (Tokyo University) as Vice-Presidents, and also Professor Shigeki Matsuto as Secretary General made great contributions to the foundation of the JASS. The purpose of the JASS is to bring together developments in scientific activities on arsenic. Since then, the Special Symposium on arsenic has been held once every two years. In these symposia, a variety of researchers in fields such as medicine, pharmacology, chemistry, biology, engineering and agriculture have communicated their advances in arsenic research.

The seventh Symposium was held in Fukuoka

City, Japan, on 23–24 November 1995. At the Symposium, 50 papers, including three special lectures on the environmental pollution of well-water in Fukuoka Prefecture, were presented. The increasing interest in arsenic is indicated by the fact that more than 300 researchers attended. There were many interesting reports on environmental pollution, metabolism of arsenic and toxicity involving arsenic compounds including gallium arsenide. Not only for arsenic of toxicological significance have the experimental methods been useful; they have also constituted a powerful tool for elucidating normal physiological mechanisms.

This special issue is designed to highlight the recent research activities presented at the Symposium.

On behalf of the organizing community of the seventh Symposium and the JASS, we wish to express special thanks to Professor P. J. Craig, the General Editor of the journal *Applied Organometallic Chemistry*. With the cooperation of Professor Shigeru Maeda (Kagoshima University), who last year was elected President of the JASS, he has made a great contribution in publishing selected reports of the Symposium as a special issue of *Applied Organometallic Chemistry*.

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