20th Japan-Korea Joint Meeting
of Otorhinolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
(JKJM 2026)

September 30 (Wed.) – October 2 (Fri.), 2026
*September 30: Welcome Reception only

Luncheon Seminar 2

Does Distance Still Matter in Hearing Care? --Challenges and Solutions from Hokkaido

Chair

Naohito Hato MD, PhD

Department of Otolaryngology, Ehime University School of Medicine, MD, PhD, Professor

Speaker

Kenichi Takano MD, PhD

Professor and Chair
Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery
Sapporo Medical University

October 1 (Thu.),2026,
12:00～12:50

Venue Room B(2F Regent Hall)
Grand Mercure Sapporo Odori Park

Co-organized by the 20th Japan-Korea Joint Meeting of Otorhinolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (JKJM 2026) / Makichie Co., Ltd.

Speaker

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Education and Occupation

2001 M.D., Sapporo Medical University School of Medicine
2001-2003 Resident, Sapporo Medical University Hospital
2003-2008 Physician, Sapporo Medical University
2008-2012 Assistant Professor
2011-2012 Visiting fellow, Yale University
2013-2016 Junior Associate Professor, Sapporo Medical University
2016-2018 Associate Professor
2018-present Professor and Chairman

Does Distance Still Matter in Hearing Care? –Challenges and Solutions from Hokkaido

Recent advances in hearing healthcare technologies, including hearing aids and cochlear implants, have substantially improved the diagnosis and management of hearing loss. Nevertheless, despite these technological developments, geographical distance between patients' residences and specialized hearing centers remains a major determinant of access to high-quality hearing care. Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan, is characterized by its vast geographical area, widely dispersed population, harsh winter climate, and limited number of specialized hearing centers. These unique characteristics make Hokkaido an ideal model for examining the impact of geography on hearing healthcare delivery.

In this lecture, I will present recent advances in tele-audiology based on our clinical experience in Hokkaido, with a particular focus on multicenter studies of remote cochlear implant programming and long-term follow-up. Our findings demonstrate that remote hearing care provides clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction comparable to conventional face-to-face services while significantly reducing travel burden and improving accessibility to specialized care. Technical, operational, and organizational challenges associated with implementing tele-audiology in routine clinical practice will also be discussed.

Finally, future perspectives on lifelong hearing healthcare will be explored, including the integration of digital health technologies, artificial intelligence, home-based monitoring, and hybrid models of care. Although geographical barriers themselves cannot be eliminated, our experience in Hokkaido suggests that their impact on healthcare disparities can be substantially reduced through technological innovation, patient-centered healthcare system design, and multidisciplinary collaboration. The experience gained in Hokkaido may serve as a practical model for reducing geographical disparities and advancing equitable hearing healthcare in regions facing similar challenges worldwide.