

## Japan Affiliate Visiting Mission Returns to North American Plants

by Osamu Matsumoto and Michael Lucey

**A**s one of the highlights of the Affiliate's yearly program, the 2011 tour of overseas pharmaceutical plants began in late October in Ontario, Canada, and was concluded one very full week later on the East Coast of the US. All tour registrants then transferred to Dallas, Texas, to participate in the ISPE Annual Meeting.

In the several months of set-up, the Plant Tour Organizing Committee met on a regular basis at the Affiliate offices in Yushima, Tokyo. Adjunct Directors Mason Waterbury and Michael Lucey were responsible for closely coordinating with Canada and the US, while the "in-Japan" arrangements fell within the scope of Affiliate Officer Shigeru Nakamura and Directors Osamu Matsumoto and Masayuki Akutagawa.

The group that travelled was made up of three of the organizers and sixteen delegates from Japan's pharmaceutical industry. The total party was well balanced: five from pharmaceutical companies, seven from engineering companies, four from construction companies, and three from equipment fabricators.

For this first ever Affiliate plant tour to Toronto, the Canada Chapter warmly welcomed the Japanese mission and carefully managed the visiting schedule throughout. Conveniently located for visiting in the city suburbs were Therapure, a contract manufacturer for bio-products production, and Patheon, a contract manufacturer for solid dosage production, both of whom extended a warm hand of friendship to the Affiliate. Easily accessed too was Sanofi Pasteur, the famed large-scale vaccine manufacturer, who proved to be a fine host. The Chapter-Affiliate reception in the final evening in Ontario was a time for exchanging views over ice wine in a historic downtown setting.

Highly impressive was AstraZeneca's research laboratory in Boston where, following a detailed presentation on many aspects of the laboratory, the tour members were guided in two parties through the glass-walled open-plan R&D facility,



Mission members and hosts in front of AstraZeneca R&D Boston, Massachusetts, after the facility tour.



Presentation by MedImmune to the mission members at their facility in Frederick, Maryland.

with its highly functional use of space and focus on "communication" and "innovation."

The Affiliate was delighted to be offered the opportunity by 2011 Facility of the Year Category Award (FOYA) Winners Merck and MedImmune to walk down their facilities. Merck adopted modular construction to revamp its existing solid dosage plant in a short period and at a competitive construction cost. The subsequent visit to MedImmune permitted thorough explanations to be received and a tour of the company's monoclonal antibody production plant. Tour members admired the "dedicated training lab" for employees and efficient production management. The following week at the Annual Meeting in Dallas, it was learned that MedImmune had been crowned as Overall 2011 FOYA Winner. Returning to downtown Washington D.C., presentations and opinion were exchanged over dinner with a noted former US FDA regulator, at an event hosted by the Japan Affiliate.

To complement the "work" aspects of the tour, sightseeing breaks included Niagara Falls and New York City, as well as Washington D.C., as a time for relaxation for tour participants from the demanding daily "dose" of English language requirements built into a rigorous travel and visiting schedule. Further standout moments in the sightseeing schedule were the viewing of the grave of President Kennedy, and the memorial museum in Dallas.

In planning the plant tour, the highest possible level of cooperation was received from the host plants and organizations visited, as well as from ISPE staff in the US and Japan. The Affiliate would like to take this opportunity to express its deep gratitude to all for the opportunity to rewardingly end a challenging year in the wake of the 11 March earthquake and tsunami. Now, at the rescheduled 10th anniversary Meeting in Hiroshima on 12 and 13 April, the Affiliate is warmly welcoming all friends, new and old.

Perhaps in the spirit of a part of the tour, a paraphrasing of the late President Kennedy is called for: "Don't ask what ISPE can do for you. Ask what you can do for ISPE." 