

## **Training and utilization of simulated patients in pharmacy education**

○Midori Hirai (Dept. of Hospital Pharmacy, Sch. of Med., Kobe Univ.)

In line with the model core pharmacy curriculum announced in 2002, a new six-year pharmacy, which had previously been focused on dealing with substances, has been required to undertake a major shift of emphasis toward focusing on people, and has been obliged to make changes not only in its pedagogic content but also in its systemic structures. Currently, professionals in the field of pharmacy education are heavily occupied with the adaptation of its course examinations [computer-based tests and objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE)]. These course examinations are tests, conducted prior to a long period of practical training, to establish whether students have acquired the appropriate foundation of knowledge, skills, and professional approach required for training at the clinical front line. OSCE is a form of examination that has developed within the field of medical education and is a method of testing, with the use of simulated patients, to which diagnostic examination techniques and patient interview techniques have been acquired. The introduction of OSCE as a course examination was adopted with the change to a six-year education system; in the case of pharmacy education, the items to be tested were the skills and professional approach relating to the preparation of drugs and the skills and professional approach relating to patient contact. Regarding education in patient contact, the use of simulated patients is known to be very effective and has been widely incorporated in medical and nursing education with a view to overcoming problems caused by asymmetry of information and thereby increasing patient satisfaction. The use of simulated patients should be essential in the subjects of the new curriculum and in OSCE and there is a need for pharmacy education professionals to address and explore frameworks for communicative education, including the training of simulated patients.