

Recitation B

Fictional Genius Inspires Real Doctors

It was in 1974 when Go Watanabe first encountered the genius surgeon. A friend recommended a “cool comic book” to him when he was a first-year student in high school. Worried about his future at the time, Watanabe became fascinated by a series of *manga* stories. They were about an unlicensed surgeon who performed difficult operations at incredible speed. The doctor’s name was Black Jack. From then on, Watanabe thought only about becoming a surgeon.

After graduating from high school, Watanabe was admitted to medical school at Kanazawa University and started on the road to becoming a heart surgeon. At the age of 32, he performed a heart transplant operation in Germany. In 1999, he became the first person to successfully perform heart bypass surgery using an endoscope.

Watanabe now performs about 240 heart surgeries a year. It is usually necessary to make a 25 to 30 centimeter incision in the chest. However, he can do it by making just four tiny cuts. Patients can leave the hospital just a few days after the surgery.

Putting their trust in Watanabe, many patients visit the hospital from Japan and other countries around the world. In the sense, he is just like Black Jack, who attracts patients with intractable diseases from around the globe.

Even today, Watanabe returns to the manga that led him to the medical profession when he has problems with work.

Since 2011, “Black Jack seminars” have been held for elementary and middle school students to stimulate interest in the medical profession. Students can try their hand at surgery by making incisions and stitches on chicken meat using medical instruments. There have been 150 such events in Japan with 4,000 people participating.

Some of the students who have attended the seminars are now studying medicine to be another “Black Jack” in the future.

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