



## **Dr Shizuko Takahashi**

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#### **Biography**

Shizuko is a Research Fellow at the Center for Biomedical Ethics (CbmE) for the CENTERS program. She is trained in reproductive medicine and has worked as a certified Obstetrician, Gynecologist, and Clinical Geneticist at multiple hospitals in Tokyo. In 2011, she became the first physician to earn a PhD from the University of Tokyo's Department of Biomedical Ethics.

Her research is deeply interdisciplinary, encompassing domestic and international ethical regulations, government policies, public attitudes, and practices, with a strong focus on reproductive technologies. She has been an educator at the University of Tokyo and Yale University, teaching bioethics and medical ethics to students worldwide.

In addition to her academic work, Shizuko is also a children's book writer and illustrator. She was awarded the Women's Challenge Award at the G7 ministerial meeting in Japan in 2023 for her book, *\*The World Caught a Cold\**, which addresses the COVID-19 pandemic.

Her recent projects continue to reflect her ongoing interest in genetics, reproductive medicine, and pediatrics.

#### **Symposium 2: Lessons from Curious George: Adequately informing the child as a research subject**

##### **Abstract**

This presentation explores the ethical complexities of obtaining informed assent and consent from children in medical research. Using the "Curious George" case as a reference point, it highlights how children often misinterpret research risks due to excitement or cognitive limitations, emphasizing the need for age-appropriate communication strategies. Key methods include the use of simplified language, visual aids, and clear, structured explanations to help children better understand both risks and benefits.

The presentation also examines how different countries, particularly Singapore and Japan, approach the inclusion of children in research. A central focus is on the role of parental consent and children's capacity for assent, with special attention to parents' attitudes and perceptions in Japan. Japanese parents often prefer a collaborative family decision-making model, though their views can be influenced by the severity of the child's condition.

The discussion concludes with recommendations for improving the informed assent process, including tailoring communication to children's developmental levels, respecting their autonomy, and ensuring voluntary participation. These strategies aim to foster ethical research practices and protect the interests of child participants, particularly in regions like Japan where parental involvement plays a significant role.