

An Initiative by the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry: The To GEMS Project

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At Tohoku University, the departments and organizations that make up the Department of Psychiatry—the Department of Psychoneurology in the Graduate School of Medicine, Tohoku University Hospital, and the Endowed Department of Preventive Psychiatry in the Graduate School of Medicine—have come together to provide support and conduct research in the realms of psychiatric medicine and public health in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake. In particular, the Endowed Department of Preventive Psychiatry, established via a donation from Miyagi Prefecture in October 2011, was the linchpin of these activities, with the following staff taking part: Matsumoto, Takahashi, Uchida, and Mitate (the replacement for Aoyagi, who remained until October). In addition, the following research staff took part through the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare’s Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research: Koshimichi (replacing Maezawa, who remained until September) and Fujieda¹⁾. The activities of the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry were titled the To GEMS Project: Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry Great East Japan Earthquake Mental Health Support and Research Project.

To GEMS activities involved the implementation of support via the formation of care teams and the planning of collaboration between those teams and individuals affiliated with mental health and welfare organizations inside and outside Miyagi. Even after the founding of the MDMHCC, we continued to provide support after taking up the duties of the mental health care teams. In FY 2012 and beyond, after the MDMHCC began operating at full scale, we collaborated and cooperated with them while continuing our efforts to implement middle- to long-term support and research. In particular, in terms of their support activities, the staff members of the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry attend to their duties as part-time staff of the MDMHCC.

In the Ishinomaki area, Sato, a graduate student in the Department of Psychoneurology, had been continuously engaged in support since the immediate post-disaster mental health care team period; in FY 2012, too, he conducted activities including survivor outreach, lectures for supporters and survivors, and technical support for specialists, all in collaboration with the Ishinomaki Regional Center. In addition, Ueda, another graduate student in the Department of Psychoneurology, carried out support in Ishinomaki in the form of assisting in Sato’s activities. In Iwanuma, Katsura is currently continuing support activities, primarily through regular monthly training and case study sessions for city public health nurses, temporary housing resident supporters, and so on. In Kesennuma, Sakuma, a Department of Psychoneurology graduate student, has been conducting support activities since immediately after the disaster, and in FY 2012, was involved in workplace mental health countermeasure support and other tasks for Kesennuma City employees.

As part-time staff members of the MDMHCC, To GEMS staff dedicated themselves to duties including post-disaster mental health lectures and health counseling for temporary housing tenants and staff members of municipalities and other public agencies. In particular, in Kesennuma City Hall, Minamisanriku, Ishinomaki City Hall, Ishinomaki District Water Supply Authority, Ishinomaki District-wide Area Administrative Office Association, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Camp Funaoka, and the SWCs of various disaster-affected areas, they conducted regular training workshops and implemented workplace-wide mental health measures. In addition, with Takahashi as the leader, they have been carrying out mental health measures for nurses working in hospitals throughout Miyagi Prefecture who were affected by the disaster. Finally, they implemented surveys in psychiatric care institutions throughout the prefecture. Part of these activities were carried out as research projects under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, and detailed information about them has been provided elsewhere in this bulletin.

Furthermore, we worked alongside the MDMHCC to host a psychological support skill-up training, planned as part of human resource development efforts in mental health care facilities throughout Miyagi Prefecture in the wake of the disaster. In particular, in order to achieve medium- to long-term dissemination of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), we obtained the assistance of the CBT Center and held a workshop helmed by an external lecturer. In addition, we decided to conduct

a support program specialized for the recovery and reconstruction period after a disaster: the Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR) program. To educate residents at large and supporters on both this approach and the basic ideologies and skills of CBT, and to have both these groups learn a bit more about stress care in the context of daily life activities, we held “Training Exercises for the Mind and Heart” sessions. Finally, we assisted the foreign support organization Give2Asia in their support projects for the MDMHCC.

In the future, we of the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry aim to collaborate and cooperate with the MDMHCC to contribute to the long-term reconstruction of the field of psychiatric care in Miyagi.

1) Lecture Staff:

- a. Hiroo Matsuoka, Professor (Psychiatrist)
- b. Kazunori Matsumoto, Associate Professor (Psychiatrist)
- c. Yoko Takahashi, Assistant Professor (Nurse)
- d. Tomohiro Uchida, Assistant Professor (Clinical psychologist)
- e. Rie Koshimichi, Technical Assistant (Clinical psychologist)
- f. Kyoko Mitate, Administrative Assistant
- g. Yuko Fujieda, Administrative Assistant

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