

## 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 Tohoku University Graduate School of Medicine Endowed Department of Preventive Psychiatry, established via a donation from Miyagi Prefecture in October 2011—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. The primary active members in FY 2013 were Matsumoto, Takahashi, Uchida, Koshimichi, Mitate, and Saito from the Endowed Department, and Ueda, Katsura, Sakuma, and Sato from the Graduate Department of Psychoneurology. The activities of the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry form the To GEMS Project: the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry Great East Japan Earthquake Mental Health Support and Research Project.

Much of our activities have been conducted with the cooperation of the MDMHCC, where our staff also work part-time. In the Ishinomaki area, Sato and Ueda have collaborated with the Ishinomaki Regional Center of the MDMHCC to provide regular outreach to disaster survivors with suspected or confirmed mental illnesses, conducted lectures for supporters and survivors, and provided specialists with technical support. In Iwanuma, Katsura continues to provide regular monthly training and case study support mainly for public health nurses and supporters of residents of container-type and private rental housing. Sakuma and Takahashi have provided support for municipal staff, and Matsumoto and Ueda conducted awareness lectures for supporters and the general public.

In terms of our research activities, as we describe elsewhere, their scope is quite large. Our main projects were as follows: (1) health survey of public service employees in disaster areas, (2) hospital survey on psychiatric care in the emergency and acute phases, and (3) research on the development and dissemination of mental support methods in disaster areas. In Project (1), we have also incorporated support activities for these employees, and in addition to jointly implementing post-survey workplace health counseling with the MDMHCC, we have provided advice to human resource officials and employee-focused training. Sakuma, Ueda, Takahashi, and Koshimichi have overseen these efforts in Kesenuma and Minamisanriku, with Takahashi working with nurses in disaster areas, and Ueda in charge of SWC members. For Project (2), we have solicited the cooperation of the Hyogo Disaster Mental Health Care Center, are currently implementing interventions in the Motoyoshi District of Kesenuma aimed at testing the implementability of Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR), a support program specially designed for use in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. Additionally, to educate residents and supporters on both this approach and the basic ideologies and skills of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and to have both these groups learn a bit more about stress care in the context of daily life activities, Ueda has spearheaded a set of workshops titled “Training Exercises for the Mind and Heart.” These initiatives have also been implemented as part of research projects made possible by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research program, and the Senshin Medical Research Foundation. In particular, in July 2013, as part of the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research project titled “Research on Epidemiological Surveys to Determine the Status of Mental Illness and on the Development of Effective Interventional Methods after the Great East Japan Earthquake” (Principal Investigator: Hiroo Matsuoka), a symposium titled “Psychiatric Disaster Damage and Responses Thereto After the Great East Japan Earthquake: Looking Back at Miyagi Prefecture During the Immediate Post-Disaster and Acute Periods” was held, and we published a record of the proceedings thereof.

Further, 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 after the disaster. For these lectures, we obtained the assistance of Dr. Yutaka Ono of the CBT Center in an effort to train specialists capable of practicing CBT so that they may use it

to contribute to mid- to long-term support efforts in disaster areas. 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.

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