

Activities related to disaster psychiatry and health by the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry

Tohoku University Graduate School of Medicine Neuropsychiatry / Department of Preventive Psychiatry

Endowed Course

Associate Professor - **Kazunori Matsumoto**

The Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry mainly consists of the Preventive Psychiatry Endowed Course (hereinafter referred to as the Preventive Course), which was established by the donation from Miyagi Prefecture in October 2011. In this course, the department, including the psychiatry and neurology fields and Hospital Psychiatry Section, work together to provide support and research for the Great East Japan Earthquake. The primary members of the activities in FY2014 were: Matsumoto, Takahashi, Nagao, Abe, Mitate, Saito in the preventive course; Matsuoka, and Ueda in the field of neuropsychiatry; and Katsura, Sakuma, and Sato in the hospital psychiatry section. Many of our activities are carried out in cooperation with the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center where our staff members also work part-time.

One of the priorities of the current activities was conducting health surveys and providing support for people working in municipalities, social welfare councils, and hospitals in the affected areas. In addition to regular health surveys, we provided health consultations at workplaces, advice to human resources personnel, and staff training. These local supporters have been involved in difficult long-term recovery operations and support for disaster victims, and are under chronic stress. Local supporters are also victims of the disaster, with many having experienced trauma or loss and require continuous support. About this activity, in October 2014, a symposium entitled "Mental health and support for supporters during the large-scale disaster recovery phase — from experiences of the Great East Japan Earthquake", was held.

We are also focusing on developing and disseminating preventive psychiatric interventions that are useful not only during disaster recovery but also during times of peace. The first is the establishment and dissemination of an implementation system in Japan for the "Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR)," a support program specializing in the recovery phase of disasters, implemented in cooperation with the Mental Health Care Center in Hyogo Prefecture. Intervention research was conducted with the cooperation of Kesenuma City, as well as training for professional staff such as public health nurses and psychologists, and

the development and creation of DVDs as teaching materials for learning skills. The second is “Mental Health Exercise Training,” a training program for the general public led by Ueda with the cooperation of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Center within the National Psychiatric and Neurological Research Center (currently the National Research and Development Corporation). We expected to see an enhancing effect of self-efficacy related to the prevention of depression according to the current survey results. A randomized controlled trial was started in FY2014. Besides, we are focusing on the spread of cognitive-behavioral approaches in Miyagi Prefecture, for which we held “Gaining Psychological Support Skills Lectures” jointly with the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center and various other workshops. We hope to contribute to disaster recovery by increasing the level of professionals in the Miyagi Prefecture from a medium- to long-term perspective.

Other activities included sharing information inside and outside of the Miyagi Prefecture such as the Tohoku University staff working as lecturers at various workshops and giving lectures in stricken areas, and reporting on the current state of mental health and other research results at academic societies and symposia. We also share our initiatives towards disaster prevention through activities at committee meetings and review meetings on disaster management systems in Japan, including Miyagi Prefecture.

Going forward, the Tohoku University Department of Psychiatry will continue to collaborate and cooperate with the Miyagi Mental Health Care Center to contribute to the reconstruction of the mental health field in the Miyagi Prefecture from a long-term perspective.