

Action Plan

Miyagi Prefecture Mental Health Welfare Association

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Four years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and as the reconstruction progresses, newer problems have continued to occur. These problems include (1) the news and measures for mental health care constantly changing in Japan as a whole, for example, revision of the Suicide Comprehensive Measures Charter and the Mental Health Welfare Law alongside a review of the medical planning system including the psychiatric emergency system, a 5-year plan to promote dementia measures. (2) The field of psychiatry undergoing remarkable changes in the development of neuroscience and the revision of international diagnostic standards for the classification of mental illnesses. I have been involved in psychiatry for nearly 40 years. The latter half (of the 40 years) with the addition of the Great East Japan Earthquake, has been an era of “turbulence,” with many situations in which previously believed customs and common sense were denied and ways of thinking had to be corrected.

In the National University Corporation, to which I belong, organizational reforms have progressed rapidly in the past 10 years. The university’s system is evolving from one of passive management as instructed in the past by the government (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology), to a system where the university itself is strengthening its governance and is incorporating independent decision-making and consensus-building. Although there are greater responsibilities, there is also increased freedom. Greater goals will be achieved if this system works successfully.

In this turbulent era, for the past to not be modeled, a thorough analysis of the current situation and a sophisticated plan of action for the future was indispensable. An eye-catching event in the field of mental health care internationally was the proposal of a National Project for the next 20 years, created by more than 450 experts over two years with the United Kingdom at its center. This project summarized the needs at each age, from childhood to old-age¹, to strengthen mental resources. More recently, a project was announced on a global scale by the European Union titled “ROAMER (Roadmap for Mental Health Research in Europe)”, as a “plan for mental health research².” It also described plans for the promotion of mental health throughout life, prevention and early intervention, treatment and rehabilitation of mental illness, care and recovery, and social participation issues. In each case, the missing portions and the ones that required strengthening, are analyzed based on a detailed current review.

To endure change, instead of lamenting the current situation, it is necessary to learn from successes and failures, clarify current problems, and take initiative to change them. A long-term action plan is also required to recover from the earthquake.

1. Beddington J, et al: The mental wealth of nations. *Nature* 455 (7216): 1057-1060, 2008
2. Haro JM, et al: ROAMER: Roadmap for mental health research in Europe. *Int J Methods Psychiatr Res* 23 (Suppl 1): 1-14, 2014