

# Neurology and Public Health in Japan

Proceedings of the Congress on Neurology and Public Health in Japan  
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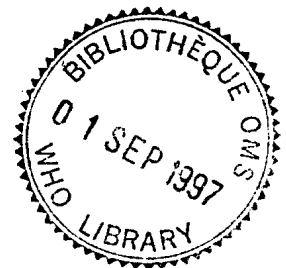
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## Preface

This book arises from a WHO-Cosponsored Conference entitled 'Neurology and Public Health in Japan', held in Tokyo on September 26-28, 1995, presided over by Kiyotaro Kondo, Professor of Public Health, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan.

This is a regional activity, part of WHO's global programme on Neurology and Public Health. The Tokyo Conference covered Japan, with a contribution from Taiwan and a review of the recent activities of the related areas from the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific.

In 1993, the WHO launched a global initiative aimed at increasing public and professional awareness of the importance of neurological disorders - which together affect hundreds of millions of people in the world. Neurological disorders are frequent, often have severe consequences and occur both in developed and developing countries. Primary prevention of a number of these conditions is possible, and there is knowledge available which, if well used in practice and administration, could improve the care of people with these disorders. Unfortunately however, prevention and treatment programmes are given insufficient attention and support in many countries.

Neurology as a medical specialty has tended to concentrate on meticulous clinical observation, diagnosis and treatment of individual patients, and on basic research in neuroscience. The WHO would like to see neurology enriched by a public health attitude, and emphasises its importance in primary care and regional health systems.

The objectives of this new WHO's initiative are to:

1. draw attention to the severity and frequency of neurological illnesses,
2. have them acknowledged as public health problems,
3. emphasise the possibilities for their prevention, and
4. ensure that care and treatment for the neurologically ill is provided, at all levels - but particularly in primary health care.

The Initiative will be carried out in several phases. The first will concentrate on developing a knowledge base and collaborative networks through a series of regional workshops, like the one summarised in this publication.

Public health incorporates five major elements; legislative, finance, facilities, manpower and technologies. These vary tremendously from country to country. Concurrent health issues also vary greatly. Diversity of neurological diseases is another factor which makes programmes for preventive neurology extremely protean.

Japan witnessed a vast change in the patterns of diseases in the postwar years. The primary cause of death

was tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, and plague. But, these were replaced by stroke for the period 1951-1980, and by cancer since 1981. Stroke has been the third main cause of death, next to heart disease, since 1985. Circulatory brain diseases still dominate in morbidities. Diseases due to easily manageable causes have been controlled, making less manageable diseases relatively more and more prevalent in recent clinical practice. Afflictions of the brain, spinal cord, nerves and muscles are diseases which have become dominant today, both in morbidity and mortality.

In this publication, a total of 50 papers, of 56 presented, cover nearly all aspects of Neurology and Public Health in Japan. They are evidence of our national efforts to cope with various problems due to neurological disorders. Additional four papers deal with WHO's own programme, and problems in other Asian countries.

Japan is one of the leading countries in academic neuroscience, and has already introduced highly systemised public health services for various illnesses, including selected diseases affecting the nervous system. We hope that this publication, 'Neurology and Public Health in Japan', will make available to the rest of the world information to help fight the tragedies of diseases of the brain.

Some Chapters cover domestic issues, and the references are available only in the Japanese reports. Such articles are unlikely to be retrievable from foreign countries, but are cited by the authors (year), and give the title translated into English in a "Research Report". The readers may write to the author for details.

The editors sincerely hope that this volume will offer some suggestions for exploring preventive neurology in many countries of the world.

The Editors

In most contributions in this volume, legislative and financial background are briefly, but not comprehensively explained. Health and welfare systems in Japan are annually reviewed in the following official reports, which are available through The Japan International Cooperation of Welfare Services, 16-5 Tomihama-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo Japan, FAX 03-3225-6590.

- The Japan Ministry of Health and Welfare: Annual Report on Health and Welfare.

Additional articles which are also useful include;

- Nakahara T, Shobayashi T (eds) Public Health in Japan; Health Service System (1995). This is available through the Japan Public Health Association, 29-8, 1-chome, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo Japan, FAX 03-3352-4605.

- Fujii M, Reich MR (1988) Rising medical costs and the reform of Japan's health insurance system. *Health Policy* 9:9-24.
- Kondo K (1995) Increasing burdens due to neurological diseases in Japan. In Chopra JS Sawhney IMS (eds) *Progress in Neurology* pp. 178-90, Churchill Livingstone, New Dehli, India.
- Teramatsu H (1995) Japan's health care system in the 21 century. *Tokai J Exp Clin Med* 20: 151-156.

## Neurology and Public Health: A WHO Initiative

### Foreword by Dr Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General of WHO

The World Health Organization has launched a global initiative aimed at increasing public and professional awareness of the importance of neurological disorders, ranging from headache to stroke, degenerations and dementias, which together affect hundreds of millions of people.

Neurological disorders are frequent, often have severe consequences and occur both in developed and developing countries. Primary prevention of a number of these conditions is possible and there is knowledge which, if well used, could improve the care of people with these disorders. Unfortunately however, prevention and treatment programmes are given insufficient attention and support in many countries.

Neurology, as a medical speciality, has tended to concentrate on meticulous clinical observation, diagnosis and treatment of individual patients and on research. WHO would like to see neurology enriched by a public health attitude and a greater emphasis on its importance in primary care and regional health systems.

The objectives of this new WHO initiative are:

- to draw attention to the severity and frequency of neurological disorders,
- to have them acknowledged as public health problems,

- to emphasize the possibilities for their prevention,
- to ensure that care and treatment for the neurologically ill are provided, at all levels, but particularly in primary health care.

The initiative will be carried out in several phases. The first of these will concentrate on the development of a knowledge base and collaborative networks, through a series of regional workshops involving participants from countries sharing language and other characteristics.

The Tokyo Conference has a special significance. Japan is very advanced in academic neuroscience, and has already introduced highly systematized public health services, for various illnesses. I believe that Neurology and Public Health in Japan represents a model that the rest of the world would do well to examine carefully. It is for this reason that the issuing of these proceedings is being supported by WHO, so that the knowledge and experiences can be shared by others.

As the Director-General of WHO, I would like to express my hearty gratitude to all who have collaborated with our initiative, and to those in particular who have contributed to this WHO document.



## Neurology and Public Health

### Opening Address by Tadayoshi Morii, The Minister of Health and Welfare

I am pleased to say that thanks to the attendance of both national and international experts, this WHO-cosponsored Conference on Neurology and Public Health in Japan can be successfully opened. I would especially like to extend a warm welcome to the participants attending from countries around the world.

We owe a deep gratitude to many people, starting with Dr John Orley of the WHO. After many years of efforts, the Organisation has made definite progress in respect to combating neurological disorders.

In Japan, we have reached what is referred to as a "period of longevity", with people now living to be over 80 years old. Medicine plays an important role in enabling people to enjoy such a long life, and its progress in this role is remarkable. However, it is still a fact that there remains many disorders, of which the cause is unknown and the method of treatment is unclear. When you consider the suffering of the families and the patients shouldering unbearable agony, hoping that the cause of the disorder and method of treatment will be found just one day earlier; we cannot rest - even for a day - in moving forward with the progress of research in this area.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare has introduced policy measures concerning Intractable Diseases, which include selected disorders with unknown causes and serious

outcomes difficult to cure. In particular, there have been significant efforts made in the study of disorders with unknown causes and unspecified methods of treatment. However, in regard to discovering the causes of these and other serious illnesses, I believe that a broad international effort is necessary.

From this point of view, I believe that this Conference, organised by a Japanese group, chaired by Professor Kondo, and co-sponsored by the WHO, allows people who have participated in specialist studies concerning neurological disorders or public health, to meet and exchange opinions, and announce the results of their research. The meeting is well-timed, and of great significance. Furthermore, I hope that the announcement of the results of the research carried out in Japan, to the academic public all over the world, will further advance the international studies in neurological science and public health. As the Minister of Health and Welfare of the host country, I can say that we plan to further promote this research.

Today, to all of you gathered here, I once again thank you for your efforts, and hope that you are able to provide the results of successful studies.

Lastly and not least, I would like to wish you all good health and a successful meeting.

(Translated from the Japanese original by Kiyotaro Kondo)

