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The 458th International Symposium on Therapy

The 458th International Symposium on Therapy was held by the Zoom Webinar on March 16, 2023. Dr. Hirohisa Murakami, Director of the International Medical Society of Japan (IMSJ), presided over the meeting.

Prospects for Pharmaceutical Policy in Japan

Introductory Message from the Chair

Takahisa Murakami, MD, PhD

Director, IMSJ

【Discourse】

International Medical Society of Japan Lecture: “Japanese Red Cross’s Aid for Ukraine, the earthquake in Turkey and Syria and COVID-19 Response”

Hiroki Tomita

President

Japanese Red Cross Academy

More than fifty thousand people in Turkey and Syria have perished since a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border on February 6. Roughly 16 million people have been affected by the earthquake in Turkey alone, including 9.1 million directly affected by the disaster. Countermeasures against the extreme winter conditions are urgently needed. At the government's request, the Turkish Red Crescent Society has taken on a leading role in the national nutrition and food sector in maintaining the nutrition of people affected by the earthquake. There have been over five thousand Turkish Red Crescent Society staff and volunteers providing food in compliance with food distribution standards to people affected by the earthquake round the clock since day one of the disaster. Eight hundred and eighty-two vehicles, mostly mobile kitchens, are being used to deliver 3.8 million meals and emergency supplies to 500 locations every day. As of late February, the Turkish Red Crescent Society had distributed 65 million hot meals and other kinds of relief. In addition, it provided large-scale aid across a range of fields, including emergency relief activities, provision of evacuation centers, medical care, mental health support, and subsistence support. Meanwhile, Syria has suffered from similar damage to Turkey. The social infrastructure in the affected region in northwestern Syria is fragile due to long-term conflict and economic sanctions, yet the Syrian Arab Red Crescent initiated emergency relief activities immediately after the quake. Economic sanctions have caused a scarcity of fuel, materials and equipment for generators and vehicles required for emergency relief activities and heavy machinery for clearing debris. Emergency response activities of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) include the distribution of food and water, emergency supplies, cash assistance, subsistence aid, medical care, mental health support, sanitation and access to safe water, and protection for women and children. The Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) decided to provide financial support worth 230 million yen in total as emergency aid. It donated 110 million yen each to the

Turkish Red Crescent Society and Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 10 million yen to the Palestine Red Crescent Society. On February 9, it began accepting donations for overseas emergency relief. Responders have been dispatched to Damascus, the capital of Syria, and Ankara, the capital of Turkey, as coordinators and are responding to requests from the Turkish Red Crescent Society for material aid, visits to affected persons, and medical care (figures and accomplishments are as of February 27).

It has already been a year since the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine began following an offensive by Russia in February 2022, and it immediately multiplied. Prospects for paths to peace continue to be elusive while the humanitarian crisis lingers on. The IFRC is leveraging all of its resources to continue providing emergency relief. According to this move, the JRCS has been providing assistance to the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and the Red Cross Societies of neighboring countries since the early stages of the conflict, based mainly on its long-standing cooperative relationship with the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (long-term emergency relief activities related to the Chernobyl nuclear accident).

While the number of internally and externally displaced persons still fluctuates, 13 million people in total, about a third of Ukraine's population, have still been driven from their homes due to the impact of the armed conflict. In early March last year, the JRCS started accepting donations for overseas emergency relief. As of February 1, 2023, it had received 8,256.58 million yen in donations from the general public and businesses.

Along with the local Ukrainian Red Cross Society, the ICRC is primarily conducting emergency relief activities in conflict zones to meet the needs for humanitarian aid to Ukraine and neighboring countries. In non-conflict zones, moreover, the IFRC mainly cooperates with the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and the Red Cross Societies of neighboring countries to provide assistance.

In response to IFRC agencies' appeals for emergency relief, the JRCS has so far provided financial support equivalent to five billion yen in total, including 2.5 billion yen to the ICRC for emergency relief activities in conflict areas and 2.5 billion yen to the IFRC for emergency relief activities in evacuation areas.

In summary, over a ten-month period following the escalation of the armed conflict on February 24, 2022, through December 2022, the contribution of the IFRC as a whole has been:

- Distributing safe water to 10.6 million people.
- Assisting in the evacuation and relocation of 805 thousand people.
- Assisting 1.19 million people with medical care.

- Protection activities for 245 thousand people, including protecting women and children, visiting POW facilities, and support for separated families.
- Assisting 1.89 million people with housing.
- Providing 14.55 million people with material aid, such as food and daily necessities.
- Providing cash assistance to 1.2 million people for their individual needs.

Responders from the JRCS were deployed to Ukraine and its neighboring countries from the early days of the conflict to help manage and coordinate emergency supplies and create a support system for the mental health care of displaced individuals.

Given the protracted nature of the armed conflict, the JRCS concluded that the form of support centered on financial donations to IFRC agencies would be limited to five billion yen. In August, after six months had passed, the JRCS was prepared for direct support and cooperation with the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, and started full-fledged inter-societal projects aimed at the whole Ukrainian country between the two Red Cross Societies with a planned total cost of 3.26 billion yen. Financial assistance has been provided for generators (550 generators), stoves (three thousand units) and the like to support people who would have to go through the winter with a lack of energy sources, as measures to cope with severe winter conditions. Ten ambulances have been donated. Financial support has been provided for cash assistance programs and the emergency relief fund of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society. In addition, in Lviv Oblast in western Ukraine, a rehabilitation center supporting wounded soldiers mainly in the medical care field has been expanded. Also, the Ukrainian Red Cross Society Service Center Support Project has been implemented. In Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, also in western Ukraine, an aid project for mobile medical clinics to maintain the health of large numbers of internally displaced persons has also been implemented. In Zakarpattia Oblast, in western Ukraine as well, the JRCS has cooperated with the Finnish Red Cross to set up temporary clinics for the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and donated portable X-ray devices.

The JRCS is Japan's largest provider of aid in the private sector and is deeply trusted by the people of Japan.

In February 2020, at the same time as the news on the death of a medical care provider in Wuhan who was responding to what would become the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was reported in Japan, the JRCS responded to the Japanese government's request to provide medical support on board the Diamond Princess cruise vessel, which had experienced an outbreak of COVID-19. The JRCS deployed a total of 142 responders, including 67 members as a Red Cross Relief Team and 75 members as the Japan Disaster Medical Assistance Team. To provide medical assistance to those

returning from Wuhan on a chartered plane, 113 doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and administrators were deployed. These actions were grounded on the Red Cross principles held by the staff members. Fortunately, no infections resulted from these activities.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 99% (90 hospitals) of the 91 Red Cross hospitals, which include small hospitals with fewer than 100 beds, in Japan have been admitting COVID-19 patients. Of these, 70 hospitals have become priority medical facilities at the requests of their respective regions. The cumulative total of inpatients reached 53,318 people as of February 12, 2023. In the early days of the pandemic, reports of large numbers of deceased people in China, Europe, and the United States were all over the news. Other hospitals were seldom willing to accept such patients in various regions. In addition to a lack of personal protective equipment, attempting to apply treatment methods was like searching in the dark. Moreover, providers of COVID-19 treatment encountered prejudice from the general public and provided COVID-19 treatment under tremendous physical and emotional stress. It remains a struggle to balance normal clinical practice with continued response to COVID-19. The JRCs has also proactively provided assistance outside its hospitals, deploying a total of 29,292 responders outside its hospitals, such as deployments to vaccination sites and the facilities where clusters occurred, and visiting doctors. In response to the government's request for widespread dispatches of nurses, a total of 932 nurses have been deployed from 36 facilities. Unavoidably, COVID-19 infections among hospital staff occurred and reached 20,121 cases as of February 16, 2023. Although this represents around one-third of all employees, fortunately, there have been no deaths due, in part, to the effectiveness of its vaccination program.

The Japanese government plans to downgrade COVID-19 to Category V, COVID-19 is entering a new phase, and the government is preparing its response.

Lecture I

Recent trend of Regulatory Administration in Japan

YAMAMOTO Fumi

Councillor for Pharmaceuticals Affairs, Minister's Secretariat

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

It has passed 3 years since all over the world faced COVID-19 pandemic. During the period, various medical products such as therapeutics and vaccines, diagnostics against COVID-19 have been developed speedily in the world and utilized practically. On the other hands, based on the bitter experience from COVID-19 pandemic, Japanese government promptly implements the measures for preparedness towards next pandemic crisis such as establishment of "Strategic Center of Biomedical Advanced Vaccine Research and Development and Response" (SCARDA), creation of emergency approval system, amendment of Infectious Disease Act and so on. With these contexts, I would like to look back 3 years activities of regulatory efforts under the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, I would like to introduce recent regulatory trend in Japan such as (1) problems/ measures for stable supply of drugs and quality matters of generic drugs, and (2) status of construction and start to utilize electronic prescription system as one of the medical DX activities.

Lecture II

Prospects of Digital Transformation for Healthcare

Jo Katsufumi

Assistant Vice-Minister

for Pharmaceutical Industry Promotion and Medical Information Management

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

The Data-based Health Management Initiatives presented a roadmap on June 4, 2021. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) provides a system with an excellent user interface that allows citizens to view health and medical information through Mynportal, etc. MHLW is promoting the development of those systems that can be viewed at medical institutions and nursing care offices.

In addition, in the Concentrated Reform Plan of the Data-based Health Management Initiatives showed a mechanism that can be confirmed at medical institutions nationwide, among the above, specified health checkup information, drug information, medical treatment information, and electronic prescriptions listed in the receipt will be gradually operative by FY2022. We are gradually expanding the scope of medical examinations, etc., as part of the expansion of the system that allows the use of one's own health and medical information.

Furthermore, in the "Basic Policy for Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2022" decided in June 2022, "Establishment of a nationwide medical information platform," "Standardization of electronic medical record information, etc.," and "Medical fee revision DX" The government policy is that the government and related industries will work together to promote these efforts.

We will show the recent measures in data health reform, and describe what is expect.
