

Project of Cooperating Agencies and Organizations

Tohoku University Graduate School of Medicine,
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ASW

Miyagi Danshukai

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

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At the psychiatry laboratory of Tohoku University, the whole laboratory, including the Department of Neuropsychiatry and the Psychiatry Department at the hospital, have been providing support since the Great East Japan Earthquake and conducting research with the Department of Preventative Psychiatry that was set up in October 2011 with a donation from Miyagi Prefecture as the driving force. The active members in FY2016 were Takahashi, Shoji, Usukura, Abe, Mitate and Saito of the Department of Preventative Psychiatry; Matsuoka and Matsumoto of the Department of Neuropsychiatry and Katsura; and Sakuma, Wada, Hamaie, and Sunagawa of the Psychiatry Department of the hospital. Additionally, Ueda, who is seconded to Sendai Municipal Hospital, was also involved in the activity. Many of our activities were conducted in collaboration/co-operation with the MDMHCC, and the staff were also working as part-time staff for the MDMHCC.

In response to the Kumamoto Earthquakes of April 14, 2016, the psychiatry laboratory of Tohoku University sent staff as part of the Miyagi Prefecture DPAT to the second wave (April 23-29, Matsumoto and Katsura), to the sixth wave (May 13-19, Wada and Shoji), and to the eighth wave (May 23-29, Ueda and Abe). The second wave engaged with establishing a support regime in Masushiro-cho for the future activities of the Miyagi Prefecture DPAT; the sixth wave was engaged with preparing for the conclusion of support, and the eighth wave was engaged with the provision of mental health training for municipality staff and with the conclusion of support. After the conclusion of deployment, we continued to engage in activities to develop the DPAT regime in Miyagi Prefecture and to provide support for various projects. For Miyagi Prefecture, it was the first-ever deployment of the DPAT, and there were many challenges. However, by making the most of the support experience at the Great East Japan Earthquake, we think that we contributed towards supporting victims in Kumamoto Prefecture.

We have continued to implement support and research in our job areas in the affected areas, and we continue to provide regular health check-ups, health consultation at workplace, advice for human resource managers, and training sessions for staff from the social welfare council and a municipal hospital. On the other hand, since a period of time has passed since the earthquake and since the stress check system has begun to work in earnest, we terminated the health survey with local authority staff in FY2017. However, we continue to provide support to the extent possible for mental health in workplace. We also conducted discussions with those in charge and implemented training sessions. We are analyzing the research data accumulated so far longitudinally, and we continue with our research that would be beneficial for post-disaster support for supporters in the future. Local supporters are victims, in addition to experiencing chronic stress due to their continuous work. We intend to continue providing support based on demand and to support the continuous enhancement of mental health measures at workplace.

We have continued to examine the feasibility of the “Skills for Psychological Recovery, SPR, a support program specialized for the recovery period following the disaster with help from the Hyogo Mental Health Care Center, and we are also engaged with disseminating it. In FY2016, we invited

Professor Tomoko Osawa, an SPR trainer, to a two-day training session in December. Supporters in the mental health and welfare area who played a key role in the community participated in the training session. The training session was received favorably, and we plan to hold another one in FY2017. As for research into the SPR's feasibility, we have finished with intervention and evaluation and are now engaged with data analysis.

Regarding the "Training Session on Mental Exercise," a training program for general public that applies the cognitive behavioral approach, the intervention part was completed in FY2015. In FY2016, we carried out data analysis and conference presentations, and we are currently writing up the papers for submission. Additionally, in FY2016, we held a training session twice for the general public on a support basis. In particular, the second session focusing on communication skills was attended by many supporters of the affected areas as part of their own mental health management.

Regarding the "Class to Improve Psychological Support Skills" aiming to spread the cognitive behavioral approach in Miyagi Prefecture, in FY2016, in addition to the conventional case examination, we offered a series of mini lectures throughout the year for new participants. Many participants were very keen on the lecture series, and they would continue to attend the lecture in the evening after work, which led to a degree of achievement. On the other hand, the degree of acquisition of cognitive behavioral therapy varied, and there are future challenges in reference to the lecture content and its level of advancement.

We continued to be active with the mental health training session for school teachers in order to strengthen young people's mental health. We held workshops on knowledge about and response to mental illness and improved communication skills among students, parents, and teachers of high schools and specialist colleges in co-operation with projects implemented by the Miyagi Prefecture and Aoba-ku, Sendai. We regularly attended the study group meeting at the MDMHCC and provided support for its research activities and co-operated with their surveys.

In addition, we engage with communication and activities for raising public awareness in and outside the prefecture by providing the lectures in the training session as part of suicide prevention measures taken by local authorities in Miyagi Prefecture and in the mental health program at workplace. We also present the situation of mental health in the affected areas and survey results at academic conferences and symposiums. In May 2016, the Department of Preventative Psychiatry played a central role in hosting the fifteenth Japanese Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Conference in Sendai. Latest research findings in the trauma field including post-disaster support were presented by researchers across Japan, and specialist-delivered lectures were provided. We also contribute to the public debate on how to prepare for future disasters through our involvement with committees and study groups on the disaster regimes of Japan, including Miyagi Prefecture, and abroad.

In FY2016, by experiencing support for the Kumamoto Earthquakes, we deeply felt that our experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake and recovery support in its aftermath is useful and valuable for the future. We, the Department of Preventative Psychiatry, Tohoku University, will continue to collaborate and co-operate with the MDMHCC in order to meet various needs such as the enhancement of community mental health in Miyagi Prefecture, the enhancement of the preventative psychiatric approach and socio-psychological support, measures for psychological trauma, and responding to disaster mental health care.