

Study on the medical condition of the aged people living in rural area in Japan

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(1) Preface

The progress of aged people's society in Japan is very rapid compared with the other country's cases in the world.

According to the survey of the Ministry of Public Welfare, the one fourth of people is more than 65 years old in 2021. And the aged people percentage is higher in rural area than in large cities.

It is said that aged people have four disresses. These are suffering from diseases, no income, loneliness and no finding of their life worth living. Following getting age, physical condition becomes poorer and help-necessary people increases in number. So the hygiene, medical care, works and social welfare for old people have become very important in present Japan.

We have studied from 1982 about the medical condition of old people, especially about hospitalized people, their medical care and so on in rural area.

Here we report about results of old people's conception about death, which we think is very important for old people's mental condition.

(2) Survey and its items

a) On the conception about their death of aged people

We got answers from 817 old people living rural areas in Toyama Prefecture in Japan. We questioned the following items and the results were considered by deviding the date into two from 45-64 years old and over 65 years old.

1. Have you ever thought about death?
2. How do you think about the mercy killing?
3. When you will die, where place do you desire?
4. Have you ever wanted to die?
5. Do you believe that there exists the world after death?
6. Do you think the average span of life will extend from now on?
7. How long do you want to live more from now?
8. Do you desire to live in a home for aged?

The brief summary of this survey. (Table 1, 2)

About half of them had thought about death, one fourth of them think mercy killing is

necessary. Most of them desire to die at their home. Very few people had thought to die at their home. Very few people had thought to die in thier life of the past. But a little more percentage of aged people had thought that.

About half them answered it is unclear whether exists the world after death.

TABLE 1

① THOUGHT ABOUT DEATH ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
YES	177	44.6%	166	50.0%
NO	122	30.7%	105	31.6%
DO NOT SUPPOSED	98	24.7%	61	18.4%
TOTAL	397	100.0%	332	100.0%

② ABOUT THE MERCY KILLING ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
NECESSARY	99	24.1%	60	17.9%
NOT NECESSARY	81	19.7%	89	26.5%
DETERMINED BY DOCTOR OR FAMILY	131	31.9%	187	55.7%
TOTAL	411	100.0%	336	100.0%

③ BEST PLACE TO DIE ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
HOME	363	87.1%	317	90.8%
HOSPITAL	47	11.3%	24	6.9%
FACILITIES FOR AGED	3	0.7%	3	0.9%
OTHERS	4	1.0%	5	1.4%
TOTAL	417	100.0%	349	100.0%

④ HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO DIE ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
YES	36	8.8%	45	13.2%
NO	211	51.3%	156	45.9%
HAVE NOT THOUGHT	164	39.3%	139	40.9%
TOTAL	411	100.0%	340	100.0%

TABLE 2

⑤ EXISTS THE WORLD AFTER DEATH ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
EXIST	82	19.5%	100	23.4%
NO EXIST	100	23.8%	64	18.9%
NOT IMAGINE	239	56.8%	165	48.7%
TOTAL	421	100.0%	339	100.0%

⑥ AVERAGE DEATH AGE EXTEND ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
EXTEND	222	55.5%	185	59.1%
NOT SO EXTEND	178	44.5%	128	40.9%
TOTAL	400	100.0%	313	100.0%

⑦ WANT TO LIVE MORE FROM NOW ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
DO NOT SUPPOSED	198	48.1%	148	44.6%
DONT TO LIVE MAY DIETOMORROW	11	2.7%	32	9.6%
WANT TO LIVE	203	49.3%	152	45.8%
TOTAL	412	100.0%	332	100.0%

⑧ WANT TO ENTER HOSPITAL OR FACILITIES FOR AGED ?

ANSWER	AGE 45~64		AGE 65 Y.O.~	
	PERSON	Y.O. RATE	PERSON	Y.O. RATE
WANT TO ENTER	9	2.1%	6	1.7%
WANT TO LIVE FAMILY TOGETHER	238	55.8%	210	60.7%
CASE BY CASE	75	17.5%	33	9.5%
HAVE NOT THOUGHT	107	24.9%	97	28.0%
TOTAL	429	100.0%	346	100.0%

Many people think the average span of life will extend. On the contrary, about half of them think that it will not more.

They desire to live with their family even when help has become necessary, instead of living in home for aged.

b) From the report about the statistics of mortality (Table 3)

We had studied the cause of death living in four rural areas in Toyama Prefecture, help by Public Health Centers. The areas are the villages in a plain, villages near cities, mountainous village and fishing villages.

Their death age was 32.8% of them at their 70's and 34.5% at their 80's. And 84% was more than 60 years old.

The table 3 shows their death causes divided according to their living. The cause of their death are mostly cancer, apoplexy and heart disease. Tuberculosis and gastrointestinal disease are very few. Death from old age is also high rate.

c) From the observation of old people's who are admitted hospital care and living in a home for aged

Old people, especially over 75 years old were increasing in number and they are losing their physical and mental strength. Many of them live alone, so other's help has become necessary for their taking meals, evacuation the bowels and taking bath.

Many old people do not want to enter the special institutions and desire to live with their family and die at their home.

TABLE 3 (A)

NUMBER OF DEATHS (CLASSIFIED BY DEATH CAUSES)

CAUSE	AREA		VILLAGE IN A PLAIN		VILLAGE NEAR CITIES		RURAL AREA		FISHING VILLAGE		TOTAL	
	SEX		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
CANCER			113	100	57	41	18	13	159	88	347	242
HEART DISEASE			88	106	35	36	25	20	98	93	246	255
APOPLEXY			104	120	35	49	24	24	79	77	242	270
LUNG DISEASE			69	65	21	10	17	13	42	34	149	122
DEATH FROM OLD AGE			31	40	4	14	12	19	38	78	85	151
LIVER DISEASE			8	10	1	2	1	0	11	4	21	16
KIDNEY DISEASE			4	11	5	6	2	3	15	12	26	32
ACCIDENT			46	26	12	3	12	4	36	23	106	56
SUICIDE			23	15	8	2	10	4	8	5	84	26
GASTROINTESTINAL DISEASE			10	6	3	7	1	3	7	4	21	20
TUBERCULOSIS			3	1	0	1	0	0	4	1	7	3
OTHERS			11	29	12	9	0	1	12	17	35	56
TOTAL			510	529	193	180	122	104	509	436	1,334	1,249

TABLE 3 (B)

RATE OF DEATHS

(%)

CAUSE	AREA		VILLAGE IN A PLAIN		VILLAGE NEAR CITIES		RURAL AREA		FISHING VILLAGE		TOTAL		
	SEX		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
CANCER			22.2	18.9	29.5	22.8	14.8	12.5	31.2	20.2	26.0	19.4	22.8
HEART DISEASE			17.3	20.0	18.1	20.0	20.5	19.2	19.3	21.3	18.4	20.4	19.4
APOPLEXY			20.4	22.7	18.1	27.2	19.7	23.1	15.5	17.7	18.1	21.6	19.8
LUNG DISEASE			13.5	12.3	10.9	5.6	13.9	12.5	8.3	7.8	11.2	9.8	10.5
DEATH FROM OLD AGE			6.1	7.6	2.1	7.8	9.8	18.3	7.5	17.9	6.4	12.1	9.1
LIVER DISEASE			1.6	1.9	0.5	1.1	0.8	0.0	2.2	0.9	1.6	1.3	1.4
KIDNY DISEASE			0.8	2.1	2.6	3.3	1.6	2.9	2.9	2.8	1.9	2.6	2.2
ACCIDENT			9.0	4.9	6.2	1.7	9.8	3.8	7.1	5.3	7.9	4.5	6.3
SUICIDE			4.5	2.8	4.1	1.1	8.2	3.8	1.6	1.1	3.7	2.1	2.9
GASTOINTESTINAL DISEASE			2.0	1.1	1.6	3.9	0.8	2.9	1.4	0.9	1.6	1.6	1.6
TUBERCULOSIS			0.6	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.4
OTHERS			2.2	5.5	6.2	5.0	0.0	1.0	2.4	3.9	2.6	4.5	3.5
TOTAL			100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

But in fact, recently, their sons and daughters live outside and work both, it is increasing about the help and medical service, but they are very lacking now. Besides, the medical cost for old people is increasing year by year. Medical insurance and government payment costed very much.

Old people have many mental stresses. But their stresses are not understood by society and family and are not paid attention.

It is important for old life to have materials for daily life and money, but it is also very important to be paid attention to their mental stresses.

(3) Summary

In Japan old-aged society at 21 century is the one of the most serious problems.

Everyone want to get old with good health condition. But living aging, disease and death are the four inevitable distresses to everyone, so this very important.

Today medicine has begun to pay attention death recently and some discussion has also begun.

Japanese Association of Rural Medicine has been studing about death titled "Study on the death of old people in rural area."

We reported here about the result of survey on the old people's conception about death.

Death has been considered as the area of philosophy or religion and it was almost ignored by medicine. But we think that after having various conception about death, old people can understand about life or health, and as the result of it, they try to maintain their good condition and they can meet their death happily.

From the observation of old people's we pointed out the importance of help to old people about their psychological and mental problem.

TABLE 4

AGE (0~79 years) PLACE TO DIE (A) (%)

PLACE \ AREA	ALL RAUND AREA	PLAIN AREA	NEAR CITY	RURAL AREA	FISHING VILLAGE
HOSPITAL	48.4	44.4	56.3	20.1	56.4
CLINIC	1.6	1.4	2.7	1.3	1.4
FASILITIES FOR AGED	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3
HOME	42.0	40.7	39.1	73.9	36.9
OTHERS	7.9	13.5	1.9	4.9	5.0

AGE (80 years) PLACE TO DIE (B) (%)

PLACE \ AREA	ALL RAUND AREA	PLAIN AREA	NEAR CITY	RURAL AREA	FISHING VILLAGE
HOSPITAL	27.4	22.1	28.1	8.2	39.8
CLINIC	1.1	0.8	1.7	2.0	1.0
FASILITIES FOR AGED	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
HOME	64.6	62.4	70.3	88.8	57.2
OTHERS	6.8	14.4	0.0	1.0	2.0