



PRESS RELEASE (2021/12/14)

Grasping the reality of addressing mental health issues arising from pandemic

Survey reveals mental health and welfare centers are playing a crucial role consulting on mental health related to COVID-19 in Japan

Life as we know it has been greatly disrupted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. However, while the acute threat of the disease to physical health has rightfully taken center stage, the pandemic is also taking a toll on another aspect of well-being: mental health.

Through a questionnaire survey of mental health and welfare centers and psychiatric institutions in Japan, researchers led by Kyushu University now have a clearer picture of the burden COVID-19 is putting on mental health care facilities.

The researchers found that mental health and welfare centers—which provide public mental health services in Japan—witnessed a huge spike in consultations related to COVID-19 in April and May of 2020, with an average of nearly 55 consultations per month at each center. This corresponded to when the first state of emergency was declared in Japan.

The vast majority of consultations occurred over the phone, and the average number of consultations decreased to under 20 by October 2020, the end of the survey period.

On the other hand, the surveyed psychiatric institutions—which can provide medical services and more in depth care—saw an average of around one consultation per month over the entire period, with nearly 40% of the consultations being face to face.

While the survey also looked into the contents of consultations and the demographics of those requesting them, the results show that mental health welfare centers in Japan have been playing a key role in responding to mental health issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To better equip these facilities to more effectively serve those in need, the researchers urge for the development of systems for mental health triage and brief psychological interventions suitable for the centers.

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For more information about this research, see “Mental health difficulties and countermeasures during the coronavirus disease pandemic in Japan: A nationwide questionnaire survey of mental health and psychiatric institutions,” Tomohiro Nakao, Keitaro Murayama, Sho Takahashi, Mami Kayama, Daisuke Nishi, Toru Horinouchi, Nozomu Oya, and

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