

1 Considering SDG solutions from the perspective of health issues

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Applicable principle

Principle 9: A commitment to promoting sustainability through education (Goals 1, 4, 6, 12, and 13)

1. Activity background

The learning objectives for the Global Culture Nursing Seminar, an elective course in the third year of the Faculty of Nursing, are to become able to tackle and discuss health and nursing issues from an international perspective and to become able to consider the relationship between peoples' health and issues in the natural and global environment. Students taking this course engage in groupwork, presentations, and discussions on considering SDG solutions. Referring to the Sustainable Development Goals Fact Sheet (United Nations Information Center, 2015), students split into groups and choose one of the 17 SDGs in which they are most interested and, focusing on topics related to health issues, consider and present solutions at the national, community, and individual Faculty of Nursing student levels. Once presentations have been made, students participate in Q&A sessions in order to exchange opinions and deepen their learning and reflection.

It is through these efforts that students are given the opportunity to consider healthcare and nursing issues from an international perspective, and to begin to aspire to go beyond the field of nursing and become nursing professionals who adopt an interdisciplinary and policy-related perspective.



Students engaged in discussion

2. Considering chosen goals and solutions

Five groups formed from 28 students worked together from May through June 2024. These groups met multiple times inside and outside lecture hours to engage in groupwork. All members of each group participated fully in the activities, and were assigned tasks such as determining what to investigate or creating presentation slides. During presentations, members of each group spent approximately 10 minutes discussing why they chose their goal, the current status of the goal, and the solution devised by the group.

(1) Goal 1: No poverty

Students presented information focusing on poverty in single-parent households in Japan and the USA. In Japan, although single-mother households outnumber single-father households nearly ten-to-one, there is a massive gap in household income due to the high rate of irregular employment among parents in single-mother households. The students also covered health issues related to poverty, such as poor nutrition and lack of access to healthcare.

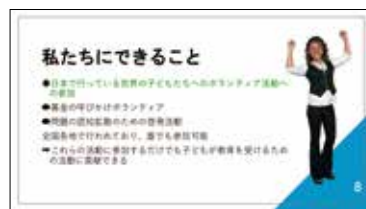
Some of the solutions proposed included investigating US food support programs and providing meals through volunteer activity. Students also discussed how medical professionals can work closely with patients to determine the causes of poverty—which individuals may otherwise be disinclined to discuss—and determine issues other than poverty with which patients are struggling.



Current status of single-parent households in Japan

(2) Goal 4: Quality education

Students chose this goal with the understanding that obtaining knowledge related to health through education can prevent illness or allow for earlier treatment. At a global level, one out of every six children or young people cannot attend school. Some reasons for this include a lack of teachers or finances, factors related to family or hospitals, or war and conflict. Students considered ways that anyone could help, and suggested donating to support organizations such as UNICEF that allow for small-sum donations, raising awareness at home, and engaging in volunteer work. They also noted that healthcare providers can learn about the current state of hygiene-related education in developing countries to contribute to future support activities.



Students proposed participating in volunteer work

(3) Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation

Students gave a presentation on the need for water during disasters. During their presentation, they explained the relationship between water and health, such as the role of the former in maintaining a sanitary environment to prevent infection, and in maintaining hydration and healthy blood flow. They also presented specific figures for the amount of water necessary during a disaster and the amount of water that could be conserved during regular daily life. The presentation also included slides created to get others thinking about the issues.

Students also presented health problems such as cystitis, thromboembolism, and infection resulting from holding back bowel movements, restricting fluid intake, or simply being in a poor sanitary environment with inadequate toilet facilities during a disaster. Some of the proposed solutions included developing a habit of conserving water, and ensuring that adequate toilet facilities are available during a disaster.



Health problems related to inadequate toilet facilities during a disaster

(4) Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production

Students chose this goal out of interest in how the mass production and mass consumption of energy and food are related to our lives and health problems. On the topic of energy, they considered whether the use of smart home appliances could reduce the amount of power we use, and whether determining health conditions through assigning scores to exercise and meals could have a positive effect on preventive medicine. On the topic of food, they shared their thoughts on whether ordering only what you can eat or taking home leftover meals could be effective in both conserving resources and preventing obesity.



Students focused on mass production and mass consumption

(5) Goal 13: Climate action

Recent climate change has resulted in extreme temperature swings, and students chose this goal to consider how climate is connected with health. In order to combat global warming, an international goal of limiting the average temperature increase to 2°C or less compared to pre-industrialization levels (1880) has been set.

Students discussed solutions split into two categories: mitigation measures and adaptation measures. Mitigation measures included conserving electricity, traveling on foot or by bicycle, eating more vegetables, reducing food waste, and recycling. Adaptation measures included hydrating frequently, using sun umbrellas and wearing hats to prevent heatstroke, and implementing disaster evacuation measures such as determining how to contact family members in an emergency

and checking hazard maps.



Adaptation measures: Preventing heatstroke, disaster evacuation measures

3. Reflecting back on what students learned

Once they have finished their presentations and discussions, students reflected on what was covered. Following are some examples of what students learned.

- I realized how important it is to convey specific information so that people take solutions as personal issues.
- It was important to consider poverty as a student but also as a healthcare provider, and to discuss the potential for providing psychological support.
- I learned something new about what the world is really like. We learned about what we can do as individuals, and I decided I would put that into practice.
- I felt it would be difficult for us students to change things, but I realized that there is much we can do, such as learning about issues so that support can be provided in the future.
- Changing your perspective reveals new problems and solutions, and I will certainly be thinking more about this topic.

4. Future learning prospects

Although students were not able to spend very much time on these activities, they were able to gain new insights through considering SDGs from the perspective of health issues, and were also able to learn about what they can do as students now and healthcare providers in the future. Many solutions require interdisciplinary efforts that go beyond the medical profession. If presented with opportunities for discussion outside of their faculty or area of expertise, these students will be able to consider issues from a multifaceted perspective and work toward reaching a solution.



Students giving a presentation