

Efforts to enhance collaboration between municipal public health nurses and home-visiting nurses in Iwate Prefecture: Holding study sessions to learn together about Iwate Prefecture's comprehensive care system

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Applicable principle

Principle 9: A commitment to promoting sustainability through education

1. Activity background

The Community Nursing Health Course is primarily responsible for educating nurses, public health nurses, and school nurses who work in the community, and consists of three areas: community public health nursing, home health nursing, and school public health nursing. Community nursing is provided to people living in the community and covering a wide range of ages from children to the elderly, people who are ill and undergoing treatment, and people at various levels of health including those with disabilities and those without. In order to educate nursing professionals capable of providing the care required for people to live as comfortably as possible according to their individual living environment, we conduct practical training for each course with the support of more than 100 facilities in the prefecture, including prefectural health centers and municipalities, home-visit nursing stations, community comprehensive support centers, offices, elementary and junior high schools, and special support schools.

Nursing professionals involved in community and home health nursing are expected to work closely with other healthcare workers to provide appropriate healthcare, medical care, and welfare in enhancing and promoting community-based comprehensive care systems. However, during a nationwide survey of home-visit nursing stations, respondents were asked about "situations where home-visiting nurses felt that patients and their families needed their help even when not requested by the local government," and more than 60% of respondents indicated "individuals with intractable diseases or mental disorders, and their families" (Kudo 2021). During practical training conducted for this course, faculty members

also observe and hear about community health issues, specific activities conducted by nursing professionals, and pioneering efforts made in Iwate Prefecture. However, they have also noted that nursing professionals engaged in practical training at facilities have been unable to share this information and reach a mutual understanding of these issues.

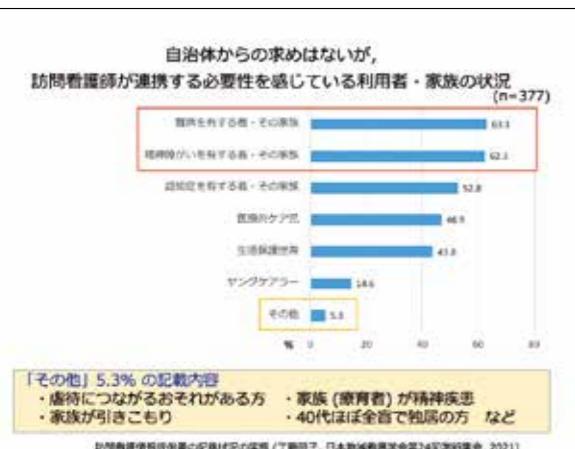
2. Activity overview

With this in mind, we began in this course to investigate efforts to enhance collaboration between municipal public health nurses and home-visiting nurses in Iwate Prefecture. Focusing on building community-based comprehensive care systems that effectively address mental disorders (comprehensive care systems)—a common issue for both types of nursing professionals in local communities—we exchanged information with related organizations including Prefectural Headquarters, health centers, and the Iwate Prefecture Home-Visit Nursing Station Council, in order to determine the circumstances behind such factors as comprehensive care system trends in the prefecture and each area, relations with individuals with mental disorders and their families, and home-visit nursing stations. We then proceeded to plan joint training sessions, with the expectation that collaborating and working together would improve mutual understanding between both types of nursing professionals. Finally, we held study sessions with the goal of providing specific opportunities for participants to understand Iwate Prefecture's comprehensive care system and consider their own roles in it.

(1) Sharing information with related organizations (on-site visits, September to October)

[1] Iwate Prefecture Department of Health and Welfare, Disability Health and Welfare Division

During our discussions, we asked about national trends in comprehensive care systems and specific efforts in Iwate Prefecture. Up through 2022, we worked closely with organizations such as community self-support councils to promote the transition to community life for those with mental disorders based on the circumstances of the community in each disability health and welfare area. In 2023, we worked toward promoting efforts aimed at building community support organizations where health, medicine, and welfare would work together under the supervision of health centers. Since 2024, we have continued to determine circumstances in each community while evaluating our efforts thus far, analyze issues, and establish opportunities for discussion in each area. We have also been briefed on the need for specific methodologies, push-type support to solve issues, and on-site support utilizing close collaboration with advisors. The Mental Health Supporter Training Program was launched in 2024, and we understand that the goal is to train roughly 10,000 people over the next 10 years.



Prior research (Kudo 2021), JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI) 20K11047

[2] Iwate Prefecture Central Health Center

During our discussions, we asked about the five pillars for comprehensive care system efforts in the Morioka area (up through 2026). We were briefed on efforts for 2024, including holding training sessions and study sessions to promote the comprehensive care system, providing opportunities for discussion (core meetings), and conducting mental health supporter training. Two members of our faculty also participated in the second comprehensive care system study session.

[3] Iwate Prefecture Home-Visit Nursing Station Council Secretariat

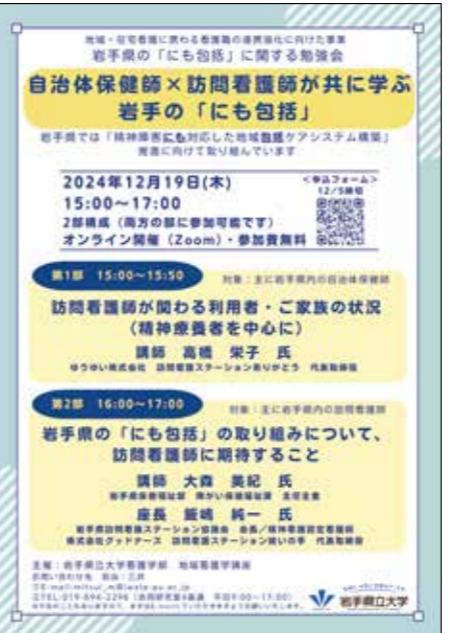
During our discussions, administrators gained a better understanding of the comprehensive care system and confirmed that there is high demand for information on Iwate Prefecture's efforts.

[4] Home-visit nursing station A

During our discussions, we learned that these businesses are contracted by the town to provide at-home mental and physical care.

(2) Holding study sessions to learn together about Iwate Prefecture's comprehensive care system

On December 19, we held an online study session covering Iwate Prefecture's comprehensive care system, with support from Iwate Prefecture and the Iwate Prefecture Home-Visit Nursing Station Council. The session was scheduled on a weekday afternoon, so that both types of nursing professionals could participate. The information that would be covered during the session was carefully considered ahead of time, and the session was split into two segments.



Study session information flyer

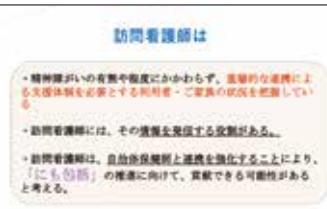
The study session was accessed by approximately 70 people (27 municipal public health nurses, 29 home-visiting nurses, and three school faculty members who registered in advance; and nine staff members, lecturers, etc. on the day of the sessions).

During the first segment, prefectural home-visiting nurses provided an overview of the main duties and work circumstances of psychiatric home-visiting nurses, and provided examples of collaborative work efforts with local governments.

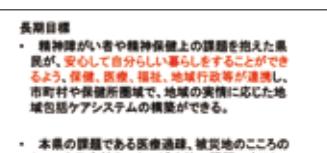
[Source] Japanese Nursing Association: *Providing Health and Medical Treatment Support and Establishing Systems for the Entire Community Through Collaboration and Cooperation Between Municipal Public Health Nurses and Community Nursing Professionals: Preventing Severe Illness So That Residents Can Continue to Live in Their Communities*, p33, 2024.

During the second segment, prefectural officials provided an overview of efforts related to Iwate Prefecture's comprehensive care system, and explained what was expected of home-visiting nurses. A Q&A session was held after the lectures for participants to provide feedback on the current status of efforts, such as how collaboration between the government and home-visiting nurses in resource-starved communities must be improved, and about providing support to families struggling with multiple problems. Participants were asked to answer a questionnaire after the session. Respondents indicated that they reached new conclusions after hearing from professionals in different positions, confirming that the study session was of help in considering their own roles in promoting Iwate Prefecture's comprehensive care system.

The study session was an excellent opportunity for nursing professionals working in the community and at homes to learn more about each other, and to share information on the current efforts, issues, and future goals of Iwate Prefecture. It also demonstrated that providing opportunities for professionals to learn together about common issues in the community has the potential to enhance collaboration between both types of nursing professionals in areas beyond the comprehensive care system, such as intractable diseases, dementia, and children requiring constant medical care.



A slide from the lecture during the first segment



A slide from the lecture during the second segment

3. Future activities

The Japanese Nursing Association (2024) has indicated that a two-pronged approach is necessary to provide health and medical treatment support for the community: determining specific and individual health conditions, and considering measures that view the community as a whole. It has also argued that collaboration utilizing the strengths of municipal public health nurses and community nursing professionals—such as those in clinics, outpatient hospitals, and home-visit nursing—would be crucial in ensuring that efforts are effective. Iwate Prefecture's comprehensive care system has shown that the efforts of existing councils, health centers, and municipalities have promoted collaboration between home-visit nursing stations specialized in mental health, health/welfare agencies, and other organizations, with psychiatric hospitals serving a core role. However, it is also true that home-care patients suffering from both mental disorders and chronic disease, and their families, are sometimes provided support by home-visit nursing stations not specialized in mental health. Organizations will need to be established so that home-visiting nurses, who are familiar with the conditions of residents requiring support, can participate in opportunities for discussion. We will continue offering this course while leveraging the strengths of community nursing, in order to help enhance collaboration between municipal public health nurses and home-visiting nurses, including school nurses and industrial public health nurses.