

Various Activities of Kochi Medical Association

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Outline of Kochi Prefecture

Kochi prefecture has a forest and field with little tracts of flat land, which covers 84% of the whole area, which ratio is the highest in Japan. It is bordered on the south by the ocean, and on the north by the Shikoku Mountains, as high as one thousand and several hundred meters, and is famous for bountiful forests and the Black Current. As of 30 September 2007, the prefecture's population had fallen below 800,000 to 790,950, of which 326,848, or 41%, are heavily concentrated in Kochi city. The prefecture's demographics are 12.6% aged under 15, 60.7% aged 15 to 64, and 26.7% aged 65 and older, meaning it is one of the few prefectures with a high percent of aged residents.

In the wide-ranging municipality mergers of the past twenty years, the number of prefecture municipalities fell from 53 to 34, but the structure of the local medical associations remains unchanged, comprising the Kochi University Medical Faculty Medical Association and the seven municipal medical associations: the Kochi City Medical Association, the Aki County Medical Association, the Kami County Medical Association, the Tosa Nagaoka County Medical Association, the Agawa County Medical Association, the Takaoka County Medical Association and the Hata Medical Association.

Here I would like to explain some of the various activities of the Kochi Medical Association.

Compilation of the History of Kochi Medical Association

This volume describes most all activities of the Kochi Medical Association through its publica-



tion on 28 October 1998. It consists of a total of 1,125 pages in B5 format and took an effort of over ten years on the part of the compilation committee working to mark the 50th anniversary of the medical association's re-formation. Volume 1 is the "Medical History of Tosa" covering primitive and ancient times through to the early modern era, Volume 2 the "Modernization of Medicine and the Era of Earlier Medical Associations" covering the period from 1868 to 1945, and Volume 3 the "Post-war Era of the Re-formed Medical Association." The three volumes provide a systematic medical history of the prefecture, covering changes in the health insurance system, prefectural trends in the healthcare environment and organizational changes in county and municipal medical associations and other physicians organizations and incorporating the writings of members directly involved in these developments as specialists and medical association officers.

The Cancer Registration Program with a Long History

Kochi prefecture was the only medical association

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in Japan to play a leading role in the cancer registration program. The project launched when the medical association planned prefectural field survey of cancer patients in 1971, joined the Health and Welfare Ministry's cancer registration joint study group in 1972, and inaugurated a special cancer survey committee reporting immediately to its board of directors in 1973. It was in 1981 that cancer became the leading cause of death, making this program's launch ten years in advance of that landmark.

The work of sorting the registration cards sent in by members was originally performed manually in one corner of a room in the medical association's building, but the program was later assigned its own room and the operation computerized. Besides, a national council for regional cancer registration was then set up in 1992, and the national project that then developed was recognized as a significant research project in the Ten-Year Cancer Victory Plan of 1994–2003. The number of registrations is reported monthly in the *Kochi Medical Association Newsletter*, reaching a total of 82,427 registrations with the 77 registrations in August 2007.

Efforts for Proper Disposal of Medical Waste: The Kochi Prefecture Medical Waste Processing Center

According to former medical association chairman Dr. H. Murayama's contribution to "the History of Kochi Medical Association," the Kochi Prefecture Medical Waste Processing Center (authorized at the 62nd meeting of the medical association's board of representatives on 17 March 1991) is operated as a semi-public sector by Kochi prefecture, Kochi city and the Kochi Medical Association. This has brought about a facility that ranks with any in the country, the office is located in the prefectural waste treatment department. Collection and haulage is handled by an intermediate processing facility run by a general contractor licensed by the prefectural government. It handles processing of non-infectious medical waste and is running smoothly.

The facility is in future scheduled to be relocated to Ecocycle Kochi, a foundation whose director is also the prefectural governor and that commenced construction of an "ecocycle center"

on 31 October 2007. This will put in place a system in which waste generated within the prefecture is also processed within the prefecture.

Expanding on Immunization

Guidelines for the establishment of Kochi vaccination promotion committee were promulgated on 20 August 2001, and the study committee conducted a series of studies on such proposals as allowing prefectural residents to receive vaccinations at any medical institution, regardless of the area in which their municipality is located. As a result, class-2*² vaccinations have been performed successfully through a wide area since 26 November 2001, and class-1 vaccinations and vaccinations according to the superseded Tuberculosis Control Law since 1 April 2002 in a contracting agreement signed by the prefectural governor and the Kochi Medical Association chairman.

Kochi Medical Association Doctor Bank

The doctor bank opened on 1 February 2000 licensed by the Minister of Labor. As the organization is run for public benefit, this free job-search service is for physicians to access the information to seek employment. It is operated on the basis of the regulations and ordinances by the Employment Security Law. The organization handles positions for doctors, registers job seekers and job openings, conducts placement work, runs publicity in such publications as the Kochi Medical Association newsletter and performs other necessary tasks. The organization currently finds places for up to four job seekers monthly out of a pool of 30.

Kochi Prefecture School Physician, Dentist and Pharmacist Healthcare Conference

Hosted by the Kochi Medical Association, the Kochi Dentists Association, the Kochi School Pharmacists Association and the Kochi School Healthcare Association, it was held at the Kochi Medical Association building in 1986 for the first time.

Since then, it has been held annually, by the three medical associations taking turns as the

*2 Both class-1 and class-2 mean the legal classification of diseases for which vaccination is recommended according to the Immunization Law.

leader and has been proved to be an important research conference for the three associations and other school personnel. In 2007 the conference was held July 29 as per annual custom, with school healthcare commendations awarded to two physicians and three dentists, a special address and several medical association presentations

and practical presentations. The conference dealt primarily with obesity, metabolic syndrome and diet. The attendance was 78 (9 physicians, 11 dentists, 9 school pharmacists and 49 other school personnel). More school physicians will be welcomed as the attendance in the future.