

# Iwate Medical Association Activities

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## Nurse Telephone Counseling on Emergency Pediatric Care

### Background to operation

This telephone counseling service has its origin in an instance of infant death in Ichinoseki on September 4, 2002 that prompted the Iwate Medical Association to hold a series of conferences on how to monitor and upgrade the Iwate Prefecture system for emergency pediatric care. In this context, it was reported that Hiroshima Prefecture operates an emergency pediatric care telephone counseling service as a model project capable of supplementing emergency pediatric care overnight and on holidays. At the presidential conference of medical associations, a proposal was submitted suggesting that Iwate Prefecture also set up an emergency pediatric care telephone counseling operation. The prefectural medical association approached the prefecture medical and national health insurance department regarding the matter, an action that soon led to the prefectural assembly allocating budget funds for operation of the service in March 2004. A series of conferences then addressed the question of whether the service should be staffed by physicians or by nurses. The service began operation on October 1, 2004 with the backing and assistance of the Iwate Pediatric Association and staffing assistance from the Iwate Nursing Association.

### Objectives

Such demographic changes as the rise of the nuclear family, the decline in family and community child-rearing functionality, and the increasing participation of women in the workforce have heightened anxiety over child rearing. Meanwhile, nighttime and holiday emergency outpatient visits



to pediatric clinics are on the increase. Telephone counseling by nurses is in operation to cope with such circumstances and to relieve parents' and guardians' anxieties concerning child healthcare issues, providing advice on acting on and treating children's illnesses at night as well as information on medical institutions available for consultation.

### Program outline and methods

Iwate Prefecture outsources operation of the service to the prefectural medical association, and the Morioka City Medical Association handles the clerical work.

The service operates four dedicated lines with recording functionality. Before a staff counselor answers a call, a message stating, "This telephone counseling service is provided by nurses and does not offer instructions for medical treatment. No information is provided beyond advice."

The service operates from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. 365 days a year and is staffed by two veteran nurses from the Iwate Nursing Association who have child-rearing experience and work experience in pediatric clinics. Once a month, the counselors also hold a case study meeting with the pediatric

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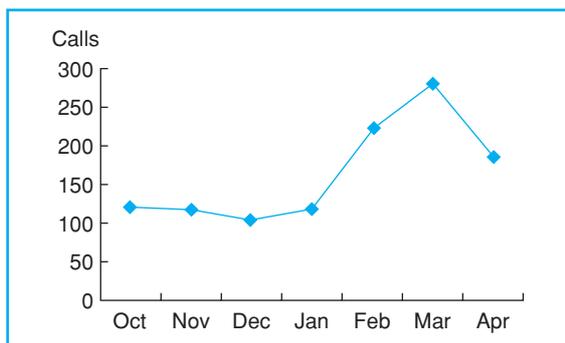


Fig. 1 Incoming calls

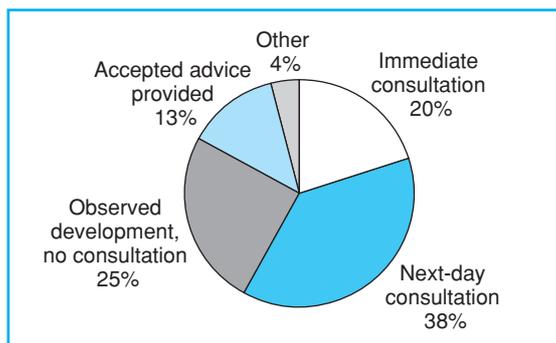


Fig. 2 Action taken after counseling

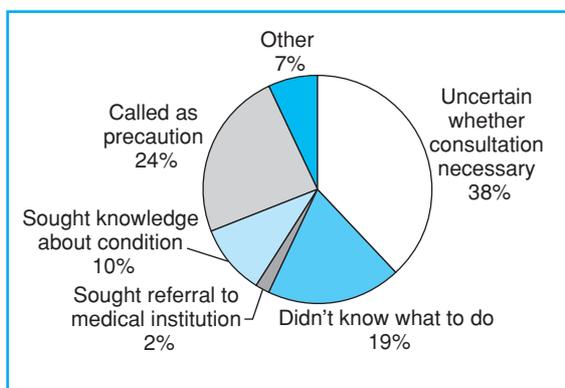


Fig. 3 Reasons for calling

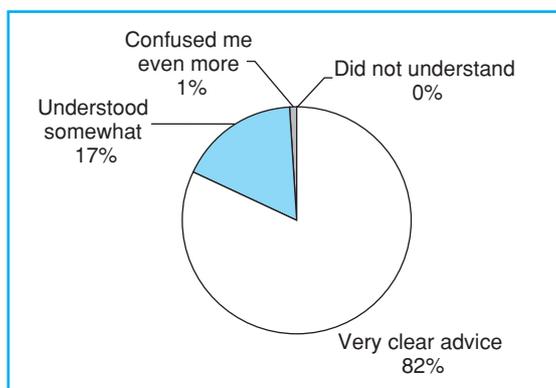


Fig. 4 Helpfulness of advice

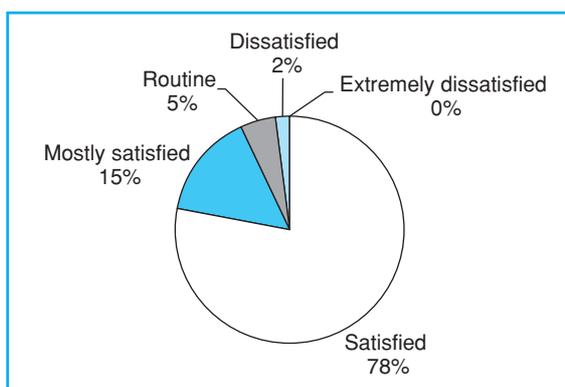


Fig. 5 Satisfaction with counselor response

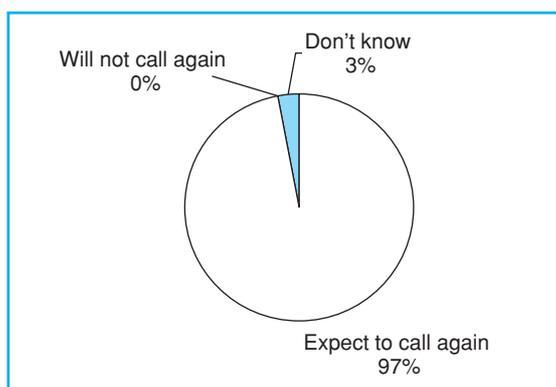


Fig. 6 Intentions for future use

association on cases arising in an effort to improve the quality of service.

### Operations

**Calls:** Figure 1 tracks the number of calls received monthly from individuals seeking advice.

**Areas of consultation:** Eighty percent of consul-

tations have to do with symptoms, including fevers, vomiting, diarrhea, and coughing. Ten percent of consultations concern accidents resulting in bruises, accidental ingestion and burns. The remaining ten percent are calls from individuals seeking medical information, advice on child care, or general information.

## Evaluation

A survey of service users was conducted in March 2005.

- Subjects: 151 counseling service callers
- Methodology: Telephone questionnaire responses
- Questions:
  - 1) How did you proceed after counseling? (Responses in Fig. 2)
  - 2) What was your reason for calling? (Responses in Fig. 3)
  - 3) Did you understand the explanation and advice of the counselor? (Responses in Fig. 4)
  - 4) Were you satisfied with how the counselor handled your call? (Responses in Fig. 5)
  - 5) Do you expect to use the service again? (Responses in Fig. 6)

## Summary

- Families using the telephone counseling service appreciate the service and find it helpful.
- The service provides appropriate advice on whether illnesses should receive immediate consultation or be observed for further development. Additionally it provides callers with information on emergency medical institutions in the community that are available for consultation.
- As the rise of the nuclear family has left parents with fewer people they are able to seek advice from, the ready availability of knowledgeable and experienced medical personnel provides child-rearing families with a sense of security.
- The prefectural system of emergency pediatric care requires further upgrading and improvement, along with the telephone counseling service.

—Tomoaki MORITA

## Iwate Medical Association Women Physicians Section

After a one-year preparation period following the proposal put by President Ikusei Ishikawa, the organizing meeting for the Women Physicians Section was held on July 14, 2001. In accordance with its bylaws and with the objectives of addressing issues from the female perspective and furthering mutual amity and exchange of information among its members and their general welfare, the section has conducted programs concerned with (1) improving standing and treatment of section members and furthering their

general welfare, (2) mutual amity and exchange of information among section members, (3) making policy recommendations that capitalize on female characteristics, and (4) supporting the academic research and social activities of female medical association members. The section's leadership comprises a section head, three assistant heads, and several directors and standing directors. Incidentally, women account for 243, or 11.3%, of the Iwate Medical Association's 2,134 members. The section's operational plan for 2005 consists of the following four items.

## External activities

The section is operating a women's healthcare counseling office. It handles the same matters as the so-called women's outpatient counseling. By listening attentively to the healthcare concerns of women who visit for counseling for 30 to 60 minutes and formulating solutions for them grounded in an appreciation of their personal feelings, women physicians are playing a role, regardless of their own specialties, in relieving their anxieties and dissatisfaction. Women physicians themselves have much to learn from this experience, in which they alternated in pairs once monthly during 2004.

## Exchanges with women medical students

Our exchanges with women medical students at Iwate Medical University are informal social gatherings where the students can hear their elders relate their experiences and how new practitioners struggle, especially how obgyns and anesthesiologists manage their daily routines along with the responsibilities of practice, and otherwise seek their advice on matters weighing on their minds. With the arrival of the new postgraduate clinical training system this year, the section invited six male and female residents with one year's experience at five different hospitals to relate their experiences. Especially noteworthy were the struggles recounted by one woman who gave birth during her one-year internship and worked night shifts with her infant entrusted to a crèche, a tale that was greeted with much applause and many questions from both the assembled men and women.

## Public lectures

We opened the special lectures given at the Women Physicians Section general meeting to

the general public, providing prefecture residents with the benefit of women's perspectives on such themes as medical care as therapy, menopausal disorders, self-fulfillment as a mother, one's children's happiness, and the importance of educating girls.

#### **Child-care support for women physicians**

The section works to provide referrals to child-care support facilities. Improving the work environment of women physicians has been a major theme in our own activities and was also taken up in the prefectural assembly in view of its significance in relieving the shortage of physicians in Iwate Prefecture. The Iwate Prefecture department of health and welfare and the Iwate Medical Association formed a women physicians employment support council to study the issue, leading to Iwate Prefecture making a contract with the Iwate Medical Association in December 2006 to manage a support program for women physicians. The Iwate Medical Association secretariat serves as the contact for registration and inquiries, while the child-care support functions have been outsourced to the non-profit organization Iwate Childcare Network, and back-to-work support for women who left the workforce to raise children and now wish to return but feel

uncomfortable has been outsourced to Iwate Medical University. In 2005, five women physicians were provided with back-to-work support, and child care is available to mothers traveling to attend academic conferences and those called for emergency surgery and patient attendance. We will continue to work to enhance our capabilities so that we are able to provide a more accessible range of services in future.

#### **Impact of the Women Physicians Section**

The new section has served to bring about exchange and cooperation among women physicians in Iwate Prefecture, raise their awareness and appreciation as medical association members, and expand opportunities for interaction with the general public. The Women Physicians Section is represented on the Iwate Medical Association website. We hope that the section will appeal to all women members for their involvement in its activities and attract non-member women physicians, especially private practitioners, to join the medical association. We hope that the growing number of women physicians achieve fulfilling lives as doctors and as women and contribute positively to social development as a force on behalf of the medical association.

—Keiko SAITO