

[Japan]

Food Safety Measures in Japan*1

Hideo KASAI¹

The widespread outbreak of enterohemorrhagic E. coli O157 food poisoning that occurred in 1996 saw some 9,451 people infected with the bacteria and took the precious lives of 12.

Furthermore, the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant that occurred in March 2011 following the Great East Japan Earthquake led to increasing concerns about the impact of radioactive materials on food, due also to the influence of media reports.

In addition, Japan still retains its traditional food culture of consuming raw meat, and in recent years there has been a string of food poisoning incidents due to this practice.

Against this background, the general public's concerns regarding food safety have been gradu-

ally increasing, and the Japanese Government has implemented various measures, including the enactment of the Food Safety Basic Act, launch of the Food Safety Commission, and establishment of the Consumer Affairs Agency.

Moreover, Japan's food self-sufficiency rate in FY 2014 was 39% based on calories (64% based on production value), and so the reality of the situation is that Japan's food supply is sustained by imports from various other countries; thus, safety management of imported foods (food-stuffs) is also an issue.

In this symposium, we will provide an outline of Japan's food safety measures as well as introduce some of the activities of the Japan Medical Association with regard to food safety.

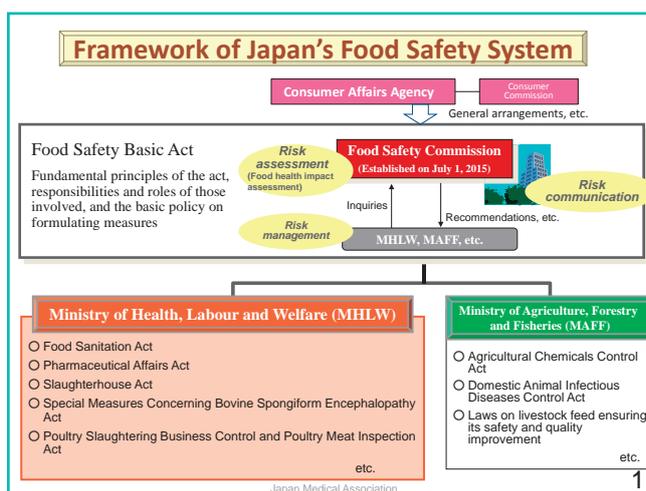
CMAAO Myanmar General Assembly
Symposium



**Food Safety
Efforts in Japan**

September 24, 2015

Hideo Kasai, M.D.
Executive Board Member
Japan Medical Association



*1 This article is based on a presentation made at the Symposium “Ensuring Food Safety: An Important Challenge Today” held at the 30th CMAAO General Assembly and 51st Council Meeting, Yangon, Myanmar, on September 23-25, 2015.

¹ Executive Board Member, Japan Medical Association (jmaintl@po.med.or.jp).

Efforts for Food Safety (Risk Analysis)

Risk Analysis

Risk analysis, which aims to protect public health, is a process to **prevent accidents beforehand as much as possible** in case a nation or certain population is at risk; it is not a process to deal with the aftermath of accidents.

Risk Assessment

Food Safety Commission

- Carry out risk assessment
- Assess the likelihood and degree of adverse effect, if and when a substance that is potentially harmful to human health is contained in food

Food Safety Basic Act

Risk Management

MHLW

- Set standards for the contents in foods
- Monitor adherence to the standards

Food Sanitation Act

MAFF

- Set standards for the use of pesticides
- Set standards for the contents of livestock feed
- Regulate animal drugs etc.

Agricultural Chemicals Control Act
Safety Assurance and Quality Improvement of Feeds Act

Consumer Affairs Agency

- Set standards for food labeling
- Monitor adherence to the labeling standards

Food Sanitation Act
Health Promotion Act
JAS Act

Risk Communication

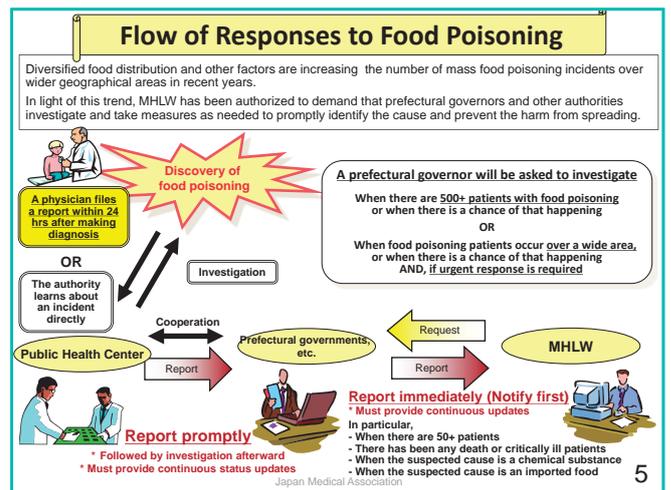
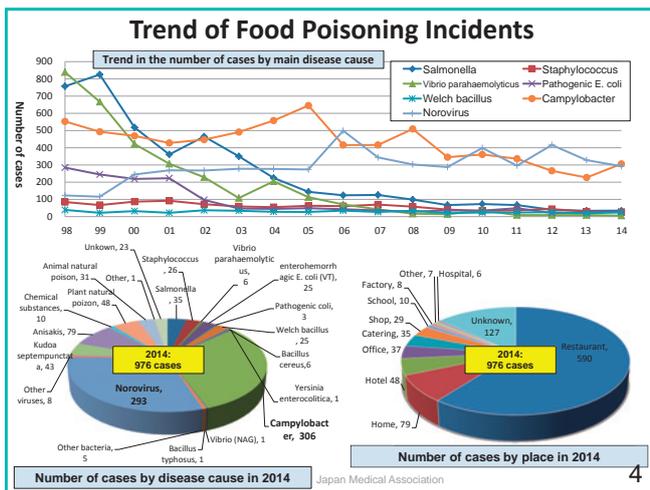
Consumer Affairs Agency is in charge of general coordination

- Disclose information on food safety
- Ensure opportunities for those involved, including consumers, to express opinions.

Japan Medical Association

Recent Food Poisoning and Related Events

Year/Month	Description
2008 Jan	Organic phosphate poisoning from frozen dumplings made in China
2009 Sep	Birth of Consumer Affairs Agency
2010 May	First ministerial conference for Japan-China Food Safety Promotion Initiative
2011	Mar: In response to the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant's accident, provisional regulation values for radioactive materials in food were established.
	May: Food poisoning by enterohemorrhagic E. coli O111 at a BBQ chain store
2012	Oct: Establishment of a regulation standard for raw beef consumption (The consumption of raw beef liver was banned in July 2012.)
	Apr: Establishment of a new standard for radioactive materials in food (old: ≤5 mSv ⇒ new: ≤1 mSv)
2013	Aug: Mass food poisoning by O157 in pickled Chinese cabbage (The health code for pickled food was revised in October of the same year.)
	Feb: Re-examination of import requirements (e.g., age in months, SRM) for imported beef (from USA, Canada, France, and Netherlands).
2014	Jul: The inspection target age in months for BSE, which previously was a blanket testing, was set to 48-month old and older.
	Dec: A pesticide (malathion) was found in frozen food.
2014 Jul	Discovery that a food processing company in Shanghai had been using expired chicken meat in their production lines. Discovery of suspected rodenticide in imported frozen smelt processed in Vietnam.



An Example of JMA's Efforts: Leaflet

◇ In order to prevent the spread of food poisoning, prompt realization of the onset and swift response are essential. JMA prepared a **leaflet about reporting food poisoning incidents** in March 2009 as a joint effort with MHLW and the Japanese Association of Public Health Center Directors.

◇ The leaflet was distributed to all JMA members to promote awareness of the need to promptly report a food poisoning incident to a public health center, as stipulated in the Food Sanitation Act.

Japan Medical Association

An Example of JMA's Efforts: Data Collection

◇ The mass food poisoning by O157 that occurred nationwide in 1996 produced 9,451 confirmed patients in 12 months with 12 fatalities.

◇ In light of this situation, JMA started **collecting data on infectious diseases and food poisoning by prefecture** since June 1997. The information is available on the JMA website.

Japan Medical Association

An Example of JMA's Efforts: Information System

◇ The market size for health food and supplements in Japan is estimated to be 1.5 trillion yen (124 hundred Million USD, FY 2012), indicating a strong interest in health among people.
 ◇ On the other hand, some cases of damage to health due to health food intake have been reported.
 ◇ JMA is trying to prevent damage from health food from spreading through its **Health Food Safety Information System** project. The project involves collecting relevant information from physicians that they learn through their daily practice, developing ways to address the issue at the JMA's Safety Management for People's Living Committee, and giving feedback to clinical practice.

8

Outcome of JMA's Health Food Safety Information System Project

Problems revealed:

- Health food itself may not have caused damage to health; excessive consumption is also likely to be the cause.
- Patients often do not inform their physicians that they are eating health food.
 → May interfere with identifying the cause of a disease, and could lead to a risk of interaction with medication.

Rather than blaming specific products and/or suppliers, it is important to raise awareness among the public and physicians about the ingredients that damage health and **how to use health food in one's diet** in order to prevent damage from occurring.

9

Problems with Health Food from Healthcare Providers' Viewpoint

- **Side effects, allergies, etc.**
 - May contain ingredients effective for maintaining health (incl. unidentified ones) in condensed form.
 - May contain active ingredients that are the same as those contained in pharmaceuticals (incl. those that are approved only by prescription or those that are not domestically approved yet).
- **Interaction with medication**
 - It may reduce the efficacy of medication or cause side effects.
 - It may cause a delay in ascertaining an interaction or identifying a cause when a patient is concealing his/her consumption of health food.
- **Multiple and/or excessive consumption among the general public and patients**
 - A patient may be consuming various health foods at once.
 - A patient may be consuming an excessive amount of health food.
- **Over-advertising**
 - A patient who believes the advertisement and publicity about the therapeutic effects of health food may miss a chance to seek medical attention.
- **Physicians' lack of information about the hazardous effects of health food**
- **Physicians are not aware of the patients' status of health food consumption**

10

JMA's Measures to Ensure Health Food Safety

Alert the customers

- Make sure to eat 3 well-balanced meals a day
- Make sure to obtain necessary daily nutrients from your daily diet
- Be aware that health food is NOT a substitute for medication
- Be aware that the consumption of health food also has risks
 - Many health food items contain pharmaceutically active ingredients.
 - The more you consume for increased effect, the more the risk grows.
 - The medication you are taking could interact with health food ingredients.
 - People often mistakenly believe that "food products are safe" or "natural ingredients are safe." Even the health food items derived from natural ingredients can still cause allergic reactions or interact with medications.
 - In particular, the sick, children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with allergies must be extremely cautious.
- If you feel that something is wrong, immediately consult your physician!
- Inform your physician that you are consuming health food.

11

Efforts in Environmental Health relating to Pollution in Japan

- The period of high economic growth from the mid-1950s to 1970s produced severe environmental pollution, resulting in serious health issues. The so-called 4 Major Pollution-caused Diseases (Minamata disease, Niigata Minamata disease, Itai-Itai disease, Yokkaichi asthma) developed into a major social problem.
- The water quality in public zones of rivers and oceans were deteriorating all over Japan, and the government promoted legislation with various pollution prevention measures to address the pollution occurring nationwide.
- The Basic Act for Environmental Pollution Control, aimed at implementing pollution management comprehensively and systematically, was established in 1967. Additional regulations and a penalty system with no probation were also introduced through new legislation or revision of existing laws in the 1970s. The foundation of the environmental policy of the government administration we have today was established during those years.

12

Legislations relating to Pollution and Environmental Health

- **Water Pollution Control Act (1971)**

The act aims to prevent polluting public water zones and ground water, protect and secure public health as well as their living environment, and safeguard the victims by stipulating the liability of business owners in the event that the sewage and liquid waste drain from their factories or workplaces negatively affect human health.
- **Basic Environment Act (1993)**

The act stipulates basic ideas about environmental conservation and clarifies the responsibilities of the national and local governments, business owners, and the public for environmental conservation. Its aim is to promote environmental protection policy and contribute to ensure healthy and cultured living for the present and future generations.

13

Demand that the Government Develops Proper Disposal Methods of Mercury Manometers and Thermometers

With the upcoming implementation of additional measures of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

Current Status

- The Minamata Convention was adopted during the diplomatic conference of October 2013 to protect human health and environment from mercury and its compounds. Nations worldwide are currently making preparations toward the enforcement of the treaty.
- After its enforcement in 2020, the manufacturing, as well as import and export of mercury-containing products, will be banned, in principle.
- Mercury manometers and thermometers are still being used at many medical and healthcare facilities including nursing schools as well as in private homes. Confusion is likely to occur when the Minamata Convention on Mercury goes into effect.

JMA demand that the government...

1. Provides a subsidy for proper disposal of mercury wastes, such as mercury manometers and thermometers, at medical and healthcare facilities including schools.
2. Expands the *Collect Mercury Manometers and Thermometers Promotion Project* that is currently carried out locally to a nationwide campaign.

Japan Medical Association

14

Thank you for your attention !



Japan Medical Association

Japan Medical Association