Medical system in Futaba region after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident - Moving forward toward the recovery of Fukushima -

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Since the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) accident occurred, vigorous efforts have been made for environmental decontamination. The area of difficult to return zone has reduced to one third of 2011, and people started to return to their homeland. As the population increased, one key issue arose; medical needs. A sharp increase in traffic as well as decontamination and reconstruction projects led to increased motor vehicle and occupational accidents, so did acceleration of population aging to an increase proportion of elderly residents with multiple medical problems. Meanwhile, significant difficulties in securing human resources have been encountered due to geographical disadvantages and loss of living conditions such as schools, medical facilities, nursing care services, shops, restaurants, etc. Staggering development of public transportation is another problem.

There used to be 8 hospitals and approximately 70 outpatient clinics in the disaster-stricken region before the accident. After the accident, all within 20 km from the Fukushima Daiichi NPP were forced to close, only one long-term hospital and 3 clinics located within 20 – 30km continued or re-opened medical practice after the accident. As evacuation was lifted, clinics started to re-open, however, they faced critical issues such as shortage of staff and financial problems. No hospital had been re-opened until 2018. Responding to the increasing medical demands, Fukushima Prefectural Government decided to establish an emergency hospital in Tomioka town, located 8 km southwest from the Fukushima Daiichi NPP. Currently, approximately 13,000 people live and Futaba Medical Center is the only emergency medical facility in the region. An effective use of proactive approaches, Information Communication Technology and air transportation is prerequisite to cope with a wide variety of medical problems of residents and workers, and address the complicated medical needs of elderly residents in the post-NPP accident site.

Keywords: medical system, nuclear disaster, evacuation

REFERENCES