

<Preface>

Recent topics in public health in Japan 2021

YOKOYAMA Tetsuji

Department of Health Promotion, National Institute of Public Health

The “Journal of the National Institute of Public Health” is published 6 times a year to promptly cover up-to-date topics in the field of public health; including health, health care, social care and environmental health, and to transmit evidence-based accurate knowledge and information to healthcare professionals. Although the journal mainly targets the readers in Japan, a special feature issue to disseminate the information about the Japanese public health to countries all over the world has been published once a year since 2019.

This feature issue “Recent topics in public health in Japan 2021” covers various topics rather than a specific detailed one because the information accessible from other countries is very limited especially in the field of public health despite the attracting interest in Japan or Japanese public health from many countries around the world. Thus, this issue is a collection of the following 6 review articles dealing with Japan’s advanced efforts of public health, to which the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) has substantially contributed.

Takemura reviewed the history of the development and the current status and issues of the Health, Labour and Welfare Sciences Research Grants under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, which supports health research policies and systems in Japan and also discussed its future direction. Kodama described recent trends and future issues confronting current health care human resources in Japan, responding to health crises such as disasters and emerging infectious diseases including the COVID-19 infection. Fukuda and Shiroyiwa reviewed the cost effectiveness evaluation of health care technologies in Japan and the role of Center for Outcomes Research and Economic Evaluation for Health at the NIPH to implement the full-scale cost effectiveness evaluation. Ishikawa, Yokoyama, and Sone presented basic findings on the contribution of the NIPH to nutrition policies and traced the development of the field of public health nutrition and the historical transition of public health measures, highlighting the NIPH’s ongoing contribution through training and research over more than 80 years. Kakinuma, Moriyama, and Kobayashi summarized current topics in residences for elderly people with services from the perspectives of living environment, functions, supply and location, improvement and assurance of service quality, appropriateness of service use, and future perspectives. Taneda reviewed the labor reforms for physicians in Japan and discussed the background issues of long working hours including insufficient functional differentiation/cooperation in the regional medical care provision system.

We hope that the information reviewed in this issue will help public health workers in the world to understand that Japanese health policies and related efforts by the NIPH have played important roles in improving the nation’s health, and to find that the Japan’s experience will be useful for the improvement of public health in their own countries. For additional information, readers are advised to also see the past feature issues of “Recent topics in public health in Japan” published in 2019 and 2020.