

<Preface>

Recent topics in public health in Japan 2023

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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 2023” 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 outlined the history of the challenges to develop artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in Japan and reviewed and discussed past achievements and future prospects for research and development (R&D) and implementation of AI, with a particular focus on the fields of health and medical care. KODAMA et al. reported on recent developments surrounding pregnant and parturient women including the subsidies and support for antenatal checkups and delivery as well as the community care and support measures during pregnancy and after birth. YUKAWA and MATSUSHIGE reviewed end-of-life care and analyzed the laws and guidelines in other countries to use the associated ethical issues as a basis for developing a code of ethics for “Voluntary Stopping of Eating and Drinking” (VSED) in Japan. ASAMI et al. generally explained the water quality incidents especially related to buildings and introduced recent water quality incidents associated with microbial contamination in drinking water storage tanks and the incident at a university hospital building. TANEDA et al. overviewed the “Regional Medical Care Vision” that were formulated to construct an efficient medical service system by promoting the functional differentiation and cooperation of medical institutions. TANO and HIRANO summarized the health hazards related to smoking among people less than 20 years of age, the current state of public awareness regarding smoking, and issues related to smoking among young people.

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 since 2019.