

# *Insufficiency of nursing care and education in an aging society with low birth rate: Ethics and education of nursing that supports the OTAGAISAMA power for better living in a community society with symbiosis*

少子高齢社会における看護と教育の払底：  
地域共生社会をよりよく生きる“お互いさま力”を支える看護の倫理と教育

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## 1. Background

I would like to address the current state and highlight some problems faced by the aging society with low birth rate in Japan. The current aging in Japan has been progressing at a higher speed than that in many other countries. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) in 2018, the percentage of the total population aged over 65 years was 28.1%. (p.11)<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the number of children has been decreasing after reaching its peak in 1995. Therefore, declining birth rate and accelerated aging society are undeniable. At present, the state of health care and welfare in Japan has become a serious problem.

Based on this background, MHLW has established a community-based integrated care system since 2014 in Japan. Briefly, this system is a policy wherein medical care converts hospital facilities into a community and integrates it with welfare. However, the Japanese population is aging rapidly, and

considering its rate of aging, this system cannot cope up with the current state of health care and welfare. Hence, this proposal aims to discuss the insufficiency of nursing care in the future and the important matters in nursing education with respect to this social change throughout our study results.

## 2. Methods

Let me show you two studies to describe this theme. We investigated the reality of nursing in the regional and depopulated regions through conducting some interviews. A region is regarded as a microcosm of its country; therefore, it is crucial to perform surveys on a regional level.<sup>2</sup> We investigated the situation of this region and grasped its feature and obtained some suggestions about nursing care and education. These regions and depopulated regions are defined as areas where medical depopulation has progressed and nurses are in short supply.<sup>3,4</sup> Furthermore, a region is a more depopulated than a city. In this study, we have termed these places as

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regions. The region we had surveyed is located in the east of the Hokkaido prefecture where medical depopulation has developed and the number of nurses is the least.<sup>5</sup>

In the first study, six newly graduated nurses (experience of less than 5 years) working in this region were interviewed and asked why they were working in this region.<sup>6</sup> In the second study, five nursing university students who participated in an internship program to observe the actual medical conditions in this region were interviewed and asked about their experiences.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Results

Overall, these two studies revealed the special relationships and an existing bond in terms of regional characteristics. Specific explanations will be provided subsequently.

First, I am going to address the results of the first study. These newly nursing graduates were working in this region because the region provided them with a huge amount of student loan to study nursing. However, their motivation to work here was not necessarily high. Some of them wished to learn more advanced medical care and nursing in the town after the mandatory termination period expires. Moreover, we discovered from the interview that they have a certain attachment to the region, considering that it is where they were born and raised. Such point was one of the strong reasons why they opted to stay in the region. In this way, we understand that the love they expressed for the region is the reason why they continue working in this location. In other words, local love refers to their own personal relationship with each other and the bond they established with the place.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the second study, we interviewed nursing students who were unfamiliar with the region, considering that they mainly lived in urban areas. Initially, they had a negative image of the region. For instance, they would live an inconvenient life, and medical care was poor in this region. Nonetheless, when I actually had conducted an internship in this region, I learned that their image has changed positively. In fact, the region is not always convenient. They were even interested in and concerned about other people living in the region and they talked with and helped each other. Hence, they had felt kindness and warmth in their relationship with the locals.<sup>7</sup>

For instance, the following story was reported. This social change started when a medical team was working at a local hospital during winter. Due to heavy snow, the hospital entrance was blocked, and clients were unable to come in. Although it was early in the morning, some people gathered there, and started shoveling the snow. Soon, the problem was resolved, and the clients were welcomed. They could see that locals helped each other rather than waiting for others to do it. It is the hospitality between people that cannot be often witnessed in urban hospitals. From this story, nursing students realized that a unique culture of helping each other exists in rural areas.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The regional characteristics obtained from the two studies demonstrate that rural communities have a strong bond among them. However, compared with the urban areas, rural areas inevitably have various problems, such as delays in advanced medical care and a shortage of medical personnel. Resource shortages, inconvenience, and lack of personnel urge the community members to help and support each other. This act is called OTAGAISAMA in Japan. I think this is an essential way of life that a society should follow.

In Japan, the era of HEISEI lasted for 30 years. During this time, we had experienced two tremendous earthquakes; one is the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, and another is the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. At that moment, people had lost everything in their lives in an instant and tremendous anxiety and fear had become widespread. Nevertheless, we learned many helpful insights from those dreadful experiences. For instance, solidarity and hospitality were remarkably manifested among the community members, similar to the good old days among Japanese people who had contributed to the recovery of the country after the war.

After the Second World War, we have been providing medical care at hospitals or clinics. It was a fragmentary health perspective to treat diseases only. Certainly, medical expertise has advanced, and the level of health has also improved. However, what I want to emphasize on is whether people have really become happier. With information technology and artificial intelligence, human relationships are becoming increasingly diluted. This observation is

reflected in Japan's declining birth rate and aging society, which includes single household, solitary death and geriatric care. I think that what robots cannot provide is essential meaning for care in emotional relationships.

Finally, I will discuss how nursing education should be. Japanese nursing education is still deeply rooted in a specialized view of medicine centered on diseases. Hence, nursing had been performed mainly in hospitals. Therefore, considering this insight, we need to return to the original starting point of nursing care, which originally looks at the lives of people. Therefore, nursing should involve a community-based integrated care system.<sup>8</sup> We need to train nurses who have a caring perspective and can act in the social community of Japan.<sup>9</sup> I think that it is considerably important to train nurses who can gain deep insight into humans and simultaneously to educate OTAGAISAMA's heart (Fig. 1). OTAGAISAMA's heart is a strong sense of empathy for human being, such as sharing pain, suffering, happiness, and so on; helping each other; and understanding others' feelings.

## 5. Conclusion

1. The foundation of people living in a region is the human bond existing between them, implying OTAGAISAMA.
2. The community-based integrated care society will be moving toward a community-based symbiotic society that strengthens the community power based on OTAGAISAMA, which is considerably important for nursing care.
3. Nursing education should consistently include caring for people beyond their diseases, such as OTAGAISAMA.



Fig. 1 OTAGAISAMA Heart

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