

Recommendation

Establishment of a Permanent Organization to
Prevent and Control Infectious Diseases



July 3, 2020

Science Council of Japan

Second-Department Subcommittee for a national program proposal
to prevent and control large-scale infectious diseases

This recommendation compiles and publishes the results of deliberations of the
Subcommittee for a national program proposal
to prevent and control large-scale infectious diseases

Subcommittee for a national program proposal
to prevent and control large-scale infectious diseases

Chair	AKIBA Suminori	Council Member, Second Department of SCJ	Specially appointed professor, Hirosaki University; Professor Emeritus, Kagoshima University
Vice Chair	HIRAI Midori	Council Member, Second Department of SCJ	Director, Japanese Red Cross Hypo Blood Center
Secretary	NUKATSUKA Yasue	Council Member, First Department of SCJ	Professor Emeritus, Tohoku University
Secretary	TOKUDA Hideyuki	Council Member, Third Department of SCJ	President, National Institute of Information and Communication Technology
	KOMATSU Hiroko	Council Member, Second Department of SCJ	President, Japanese Red Cross Kyushu International College of Nursing
	TAKAI Shinji	Council Member, Second Department of SCJ	Vice President, Kitasato University Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Kitasato University
	ISOBE Tetsu	Member, SCJ	Professor, Keio University Law School
	TANAKA Junko	Member, SCJ	Vice President, Hiroshima University, Professor, Hiroshima University Graduate School of Biomedical and Health Sciences
	UDA Hidenori	Specially-Appointed Member	Senior Adviser Health Promotion Research Center, Japan Association for Development of Community Medicine (JADECOM)
	TATEDA Kazuhiro	Specially-Appointed Member	Professor, Faculty of Medicine, Toho University

Acknowledgements

The following scientists participated in discussions on this proposal/recommendation and its preparation:

MATSUMOTO Tsuneo	President, National Consumer Affairs Center of Japan Professor Emeritus, Hitotsubashi University
ISO Hiroyasu	Professor of Public Health, Osaka University Graduate School of Medicine
KAMAKURA Mitsuhiro	Professor Emeritus, Keio University
KORIYAMA Chihaya	Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Kagoshima University Graduate School of Medical and Dental Sciences
MIKAMO Hiroshige	Professor, Department of Clinical Infectious Diseases, Aichi Medical University
KATOW, Shigetaka	Technical Advisor, Hoken Kagaku, Inc
KISHI Reiko	Special Invited Professor, Center for Environmental and Health Sciences(Professor Emeritus), Hokkaido University Vice President, the Japanese Medical Science Federation
KINOSHITA Tomio	Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University, Fellow, International Institute for Advanced Studies
SHIRAI Chika	Director, Hirakata City Public Health Center
SUGIYAMA Takehiro	Chief, Division of Health Services Research, Diabetes and Metabolism Information Center, National Center for Global Health and Medicine Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba
SHIBAYAMA Akihiro	Associate Professor, Disaster Digital Archive Research field , Disaster Information Management and Public Collaboration Division, International Research Institute of Disaster Science, Tohoku University
TAKAKURA Hiroki	Director, Center for Cybersecurity Research and Development Professor, Information Systems Architecture Science Research Division National Institute of Informatics
NAKAGAWA Shinich	CEO, Research Institute of Info-communication Medicine, Akebono Hospital, Attending physician, Director, Akebono Hospital Healthcare Center

The following SCJ staff helped to prepare the Japanese version of this document

TAKAHASHI Masayuki	Director for Scientific Affairs I
SAKAI Kenji	Deputy Director for Scientific Affairs I
KATSUMATA Mayuko	Chief of Scientific Affairs I

Summary

1. Background

We would like to extend our sincere condolence to those who died of COVID-19 and their family members.

On March 6, 2020, the Science Council of Japan made public the Statement from its Executive Board, entitled “A Request on Measures Against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), and Future Activities of Science Council of Japan.” Following this statement, we prepared this recommendation on the basis of the results of a review regarding the COVID-19 epidemic of this year and discussions on the organization which is necessary to control and prevent large-scale or critical infectious diseases, referring to exemplary cases in the US and other countries. Our review covered administrative responses, including the dissemination of appropriate information to the public and measures to address the social and economic impact of countermeasures, as well as collaborative activities in various academic fields and cooperation among industry, government and academia.

2. The current status and major problems

The COVID-19 epidemic reminded us of our country's inadequate resilience to new infectious diseases and raised a number of issues, including how to deal with infectious diseases and their associated social and economic consequences.

Particularly problematic to deal with were the following points: ascertainment of asymptomatic patients and their management; analysis of the current status of viral testing and health and medical care systems, and establishing necessary systems; countermeasures against the infectious agent and its infection routes; coping with the unprecedented social and economic consequences of those countermeasures, and dealing with anxieties and mental strains regarding current and future lives; defamation and discrimination as human rights' issue; the judgement of targeted countries/areas and the period of immigration restrictions; and cruise ship quarantine.

3. Necessary measures, organization, system, and human resource development

The National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Japan, made it clear that a new wave of epidemic is sure to come in the wake of the current one. The G20 Dialogue Forum for the Science and Research Community (S20), which was held in conjunction with G20 Germany 2017, pointed to the need of strong short-and long-term strategies based on scientific evidence to fight against infectious and non-communicable diseases that pose threats to human welfare and global health.

To take infectious-disease countermeasures without delay at the time of an emergency that may occur in the future, the government of Japan needs to establish a permanent specialized organization and develop the necessary laws and systems in non-emergency/normal times. In addition, prefectural governments should establish a governor-led commanding organization and an advisory board consisting of experts in order to take necessary

measures against infectious diseases, including large-scale and critical infectious diseases, and develop human resources, working together with the national government, starting in non-epidemic times.

4. Recommendation

(1) The Cabinet Office should establish the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Committee (a tentative name) as a permanent organization

In order to prevent and control large-scale and critical infectious diseases, it is necessary to establish the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Committee (tentative name, hereinafter referred to as the "IDPCC") as a permanent organization, and build a system to prepare for emergencies starting in normal times. The IDPCC will examine the current status of health and medical care provided to the public, the safety measures taken for health and medical care personnel, and other activities considered necessary in view of scientific and professional knowledge, starting from normal times. On the basis of results obtained from such analyses and scientific knowledge, the IDPCC will formulate necessary measures from a fair and neutral standpoint, and provide advice to the Cabinet. The IDPCC is made up of experts in public health, clinical and basic medicine related to infectious diseases. Under the IDPCC, specialized working groups shall be established. If necessary, working groups including experts in the economic, social and legal fields will also be established. When an emergency response is deemed necessary, the IDPCC shall in principle envisage several scenarios and present a recommendation (recommendations) to the Cabinet on the basis of these scenarios.

Regardless of the nature of the Committee as an administrative body, it would be easier to avoid the adverse effects of vertical division of ministries and agencies by establishing it as a permanent organization in the Cabinet Office. The IDPCC shall also be responsible for the control of infectious diseases other than large-scale and crisis infections. The accumulation of experience and information on various infectious disease countermeasures from normal times is expected to enhance its ability to respond to large-scale and critical infectious diseases.

At the same time, a permanent post should be created in the Cabinet. This person should have responsibility at the political level to combat infectious diseases, keeping in close cooperation with the IDPCC. On the basis of the recommendation(s) presented by the IDPCC, the Cabinet should take responsibility to make policy decisions on specific measures, and take infection control measures infectious diseases countermeasures in a unified manner. It is important to take systematic measures by consolidating the chain of command and disseminate information to the public. In addition, flexible measures tailored to local conditions should be implemented. To that end, prefectural governors should be given as much discretion as possible so that they can make their own decisions on the basis of regional characteristics, the prevalence of infectious diseases, and health and medical care systems.

In recent years, there has been a succession of natural disasters in Japan. Dealing with infectious diseases among evacuees at the time of disaster can be considered as an important task for the IDPCC. In preparation for a complex disaster, the IDPCC should also collaborate with relevant organizations such as the Central Disaster Management Council.

(2) A permanent organization should be established in the prefecture.

A permanent organization of experts should be established to advise prefectural governors on infectious disease control. This committee of experts should include the director of the health center, academic experts on various aspects of infectious diseases, and representatives of local medical associations and major medical institutions. At the same time, each prefecture should establish a permanent prefectural infectious disease control headquarters (tentative name), headed by the governor and consisting of prefectural personnel in charge of crisis management and disaster prevention, health and welfare, and economic policy to deal with large-scale and critical infectious diseases. At the discretion of the prefectural government, other infectious disease measures, such as measures against infectious diseases in the event of a large-scale disaster, will be included. In addition, the spread of the epidemic across prefectures should be taken into account in advance, and cooperation among neighboring prefectures should be prepared. The main tasks of prefectural headquarters are to prepare for the threat of large-scale and critical infectious diseases during normal times, and to prevent and control infectious diseases, including large-scale and critical infectious diseases, and to develop human resources.

(3) Strengthening of the system

From the viewpoint of research promotion, human resource development, emergency responses in case of an epidemic, the structures of organizations dealing with infectious diseases should be strengthened and upgraded. In particular, the national government should establish an infectious disease data center and store all domestic electronic data related to basic research, epidemiology and clinical medicine of the infectious diseases. In addition, by making such data available to a wide range of relevant researchers, an environment that promotes open science should be created.