

Legionnaires' Disease in Japan

The Editor,

Sir,

Legionnaires' disease first occurred with an outbreak of severe pneumonia in 1976 at a convention of the American Legion. The bacterium responsible was designated *Legionella pneumophila*. This was the first time a bacterium of the genus *Legionella* was identified. Members of this genus are non-glucose-fermenting Gram negative bacilli. More than 80% of the cases of Legionnaires' disease are due to *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1. Based on several previous reports on Legionnaires' disease in Japan, the current report summarizes risk factors for Legionnaires' disease.

A report has indicated that outbreaks of *Legionella* infection in Japan mostly consist of *Legionella* pneumonia and that the prevalence of these infections is about the same in Japan, Europe and the United States of America (1). The report (1) studied risk factors for *Legionella* pneumonia and identified frequent travel as one factor, suggesting an association between *Legionella* pneumonia and spa facilities. There are reports on risk factors for *Legionella* infection in Japan indicating a high prevalence in spa and bathing facilities, and 24-hour bathing; the reports also cited other factors like air conditioning, cooling towers, dirt and dust, sports facilities and swimming pools (1, 2). Another report has also indicated that individual risk factors for the onset of Legionnaires' disease are being "male", "over the age of 60

years", "a habitual smoker", "a habitual drinker", and "having an underlying condition like an autoimmune disease" (3).

The medical establishment and administrative bodies must strive to ascertain risk factors for Legionnaires' disease. In medicine, physicians must strive to understand the disease from the perspective of preventive medicine and more rapidly diagnose and respond to the disease in clinical practice when it occurs.

From: Y Fujita¹, K Inoue²,

¹Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Respiratory and Infectious Diseases, St. Marianna University School of Medicine, Kanagawa 216-8511, Japan, ²Department of Public Health, Fujita Health University School of Medicine, Aichi 470-1192, Japan.

Correspondence: Dr Y Fujita¹

²Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Respiratory and Infectious Diseases, St Marianna University School of Medicine, 2-16-1, Sugao, Miyamae-ku, Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa 216-8511, Japan, E-mail: y-f1116@med.teikyo-u.ac.jp

REFERENCES

1. Saito A. [Wagakuniniokerulegionellakansenshonotokuchotoseka inodou ko]. J Jpn Soc Intern Med. 2003; **92 Suppl**: 60-3. [in Japanese]
2. Tateyama M, Saito A. Legionella pneumonia. Nippon Rinsho. 2001; **59 Suppl 7**: 126-33. [in Japanese]
3. Katoh T, Nakao H, Kuroda Y, Imai H. [Legionellashoshuudan kansenjireinoekigakuchosa]. Jpn J Hyg 2004; **59**: 145. [in Japanese]