

Future Proposals in Light of the Current Status of Suicide Prevention Measures for the Young and Middle-aged in Japan

The Editor,

Sir,

In 1998, the number of suicides in Japan increased rapidly, and this trend has continued. Suicide must be discussed from various perspectives. This study examined suicide's rank as a cause of death by age in 5-year intervals and by gender, and it examined the percentage of suicide deaths by cause of death by age in 5-year intervals and by gender within the top five causes of death in Japan from 2002 to 2004, as reported in the vital statistics of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in the *Journal of Health and Welfare Statistics* (1).

Suicide's rank as a cause of death for individuals ages 10 to 64 years went from 1st to 4th among men and from 1st to 5th among women. Suicide was not among the top five causes of death for men and women 65 years or over. The percentage of suicide deaths by cause of death was over 5% and 3% for individuals ages 10 to 64 years for both men and women, respectively. Therefore, it is necessary to execute suicide prevention measures in younger and middle-aged persons in Japan.

According to a report (2) on causative factors for suicide in Fukushima Prefecture, Japan, "economic and life problems", "work problems" and "problems of relations between the sexes" were frequent factors for the young and middle-aged. In the report (2), among men, the young and the middle-aged had more "economic and life problems", and among women, the same two groups had more "mental health problems". The fear is that individuals committing suicide are increasingly younger (3). There is a report (4) indicating that suicide prevention programmes for junior high school students must be specifically included as part of their education. Therefore, suicide prevention measures must be implemented for the young and the middle-aged based on these causative factors. In addition, researchers should be aware that suicide rates are high among the elderly in Japan.

In conclusion, this study has indicated the need for relevant fields and organizations to work together to implement specific suicide prevention measures in concert with the general public.

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