

A Discussion of the Importance of Further Preventive Measures to Control Tuberculosis in Japan: Comparing Japan and the United States of America

The Editor,

Sir,

In Japan, the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) has risen since the late 1990s (1), and there is a renewed awareness of the importance of TB control measures. Over the last few years, measures to counter TB from various quarters have been implemented in Japan (1, 2). This study examined the changes in TB incidence from 2000 to 2005 in Japan and the United States of America (USA) based on a report by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the World Health Organization (WHO) Report in the Journal of Health and Welfare Statistics (3). Future TB control measures for Japan are also discussed based on TB control measures implemented in the USA.

During the six years studied, TB incidence (/100 000 population) in Japan ranged from a maximum of 31.0 in 2000 to a minimum of 22.2 in 2005 while TB incidence in the USA ranged from a maximum of 5.8 in 2000 to a minimum of 4.7 in 2005. During the period studied, TB incidence decreased yearly in both Japan and the USA.

A report (4) has stated that TB control measures in the USA were effective primarily because of its implementation of the DOTS (directly observed treatment, short-course) control strategy. Additionally, the report stated that Japan and the USA differed substantially in terms of the comprehensiveness of those control measures, as indicated by the fact that expenditures on TB control measures in New York City were about seven times those in Tokyo. Another report (5) indicated that the USA responses to the increase in TB have come from various quarters besides increased funding. These responses include a National Action Plan to Combat Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis and provisions to fund that plan, improved patient detection and training of physicians to detect those patients, and increased testing, restructuring of research capacity and revised treatment recommendations.

Tuberculosis incidence in Japan has decreased in recent years but is still high compared to the USA. In light of the TB control measures in the USA, numerous bodies and personnel in fields involved in TB control measures in Japan must continue to implement specific and detailed control measures.

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