

**Necessity of Comprehensive Suicide Prevention
Measures among Women in Japan:
A Comparison between Japan and France in
Age-classified Suicide Rates**

The Editor,

Sir,

In a report by the National Police Agency, the annual suicide rate in Japan changed from approximately 17–19 per 100 000 population during 1992–1997 to approximately 24–27 during 1998–2003. In France, the suicide rates decreased from 1996 to 1999 (1). In Japan, for men, the suicide rate is the 10th highest in the world, and for women, the rate is the third highest confirming that the ranking for suicides among females is higher than for males (2). A comparison of the trend in the suicide rates among age groups in Japan and France underscores the necessity of implementing further suicide prevention measures in Japan. In this report, we compared age-classified suicide rates among women in Japan and France in 1992, 1996 and 2000 according to a report by the ‘Journal of Health and Welfare Statistics’ of the Health and Welfare Statistics Association.

The annual suicide rates in 1992, 1996 and 2000 were 11.7, 11.5 and 13.4 per 100 000 population in Japan and 10.9, 10.4 and 9.5 per 100 000 population in France. The rates in 2000 showed an increase over those in 1992 and 1996 in Japan, while they showed a decrease in France. In Japan, age-classified suicide rates in 2000 showed an increase over those in 1992 and 1996 for every five-year age rank from ages 15 to 64 years. In contrast, the rates in 2000 showed a decrease as compared with those in 1992 and 1996 for the same age groups in France. In both countries, the suicide rates in the ages 65–74-year group and 75-year or over group in 1992, 1996 and 2000 were high, even though the rates in these age groups showed a decrease or tendency to decrease. Given this result, we must investigate measures to prevent suicide in all age groups of women in Japan. The main causative factors of suicide among women in Japan are

“psychiatric disorders” and “suffering from physical illness” in the younger, the middle-aged and the elderly groups (3). In order to reduce “suffering from physical illness”, patients should be given physical and mental support. Early detection and treatment of “psychiatric disorders” is critical in the prevention of suicide. To prevent suicides among women in Japan, all organizations have to cooperate in implementing comprehensive suicide prevention measures.

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