

A Report of Recent Suicides in Japan

The Editor,

Sir,

According to a report by the National Police Agency, the number of suicides in Japan has increased to more than 30 000 per year since 1998. There were also more than 30 000 suicides in 2007; this trend had continued for ten years. Statistics concerning suicide from the National Police Agency in Japan are crucial to the discussion of suicide prevention. However, these statistics are only reported once a year. When suicides increase rapidly, immediate suicide prevention measures must be planned in accordance with the causes of the rapid increase. Previous reports have indicated that the increase in suicides in Japan since 1998 is related to social and economic factors (1–6), and in the present paper, we call for personnel in related fields to pay close attention to the increase in suicides. There is a global economic recession with social downturns. In Japan, such economic and social downturns are reported almost daily. Therefore, the increase in suicides might be due to these. A report by the National Police Agency related to suicide prevention measures stated that suicide statistics are to be reported by prefectures each month starting in 2009. Ascertaining monthly suicide statistics may prove helpful to the discussion of specific suicide prevention measures that are urgently needed. Relevant organizations should also take additional specific measures to prevent suicide.

From: K Inoue¹, Y Fujita², Y Okazaki³, M Masaki⁴, Y Ono¹, T Fukunaga⁵

¹Department of Public Health, Fujita Health University School of Medicine, Aichi 470-1192, ²Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Respiratory and Infectious Diseases, St Marianna University School of Medicine, Kanagawa 216-8511, ³Tokyo Metropolitan Matsuzawa Hospital, Tokyo 156-0057, ⁴Warakukai Incorporated Medical Institution, Aichi 453-0015, ⁵Tokyo Medical Examiner's Office, Tokyo Metro-politan Government, Tokyo 112-0012, Japan.

Correspondence: Dr K Inoue, Department of Public Health, Fujita Health University School of Medicine, 1–98, Dengakugakubo, Kutsukake-cho, Toyoake, Aichi 470-1192, Japan. Fax: +81-562-93-3079, e-mail: ke-inoue@fujita-hu.ac.jp

REFERENCES

1. Ono Y. Suicide prevention program in Japan. *Psychiatry* 2006; **8**: 365–8. [in Japanese].
2. Inoue K, Tanii H, Abe S, Nishimura Y, Kaiya H, Nata M et al. The report in the correlation between the factor of unemployment and suicide in Japan. *Am J Forensic Med Pathol* 2008; **29**: 199–200.

3. Inoue K, Tanii H, Kaiya H, Abe S, Fujita Y, Masaki M et al. The risk for suicide in Japan: Review. *Int Med J* 2007; **14**: 203–6.
4. Fukunaga T, Tanifuji T, Inoue K, Ro A. Suicide from the standpoint of medical examiners. *Psychiatry* 2007; **10**: 449–55. [in Japanese]
5. Aihara H, Iki M. An ecological study of the relations between the recent high suicide rates and economic and demographic factors in Japan. *J epidemiol* 2003; **13**: 56–61.
6. Yamada K, Roxane LR. Comparison of world and Japan in suicide rates. 11th Japanese society for clinical thanatology and 30th Japan suicide prevention association 2005: 48. [in Japanese]