

Tottori Medical Association Efforts in Continuing Medical Education

JMAJ 52(2): 124–125, 2009

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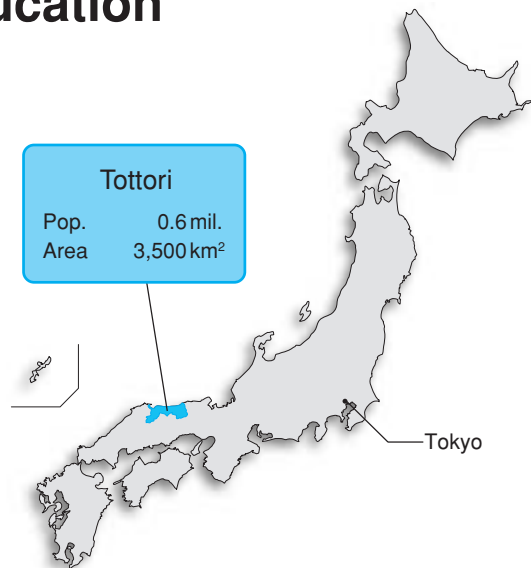
Tottori Prefecture and Tottori Medical Association (ToMA)

The earliest Japanese record of a medical practitioner is that of Daikoku, who performed dermal regeneration treatment in Sanin's mythical world of the White Hare of Inaba. The Sanin region that covers Shimane and Tottori prefectures, once the gateway to trade, and thus Japan's source of cultural innovation, now has unfortunately become the nation's backwater.

With just 600,000 residents, Tottori has the lowest population amongst Japan's prefectures, and with only 1,363 members, its prefectural medical association is also the country's smallest. Although we are small, we are well organized proving to be an advantage in rolling out speedy dynamic projects.

The medical association of Tottori is divided into four districts: east, middle, west, and the Tottori University Faculty of Medicine. With an east:middle:west population ratio of roughly 2:1:2, the east is home to prefectural administrative offices and Tottori University, and the west is home to Tottori University Faculty of Medicine Hospital. Under the leadership of President Okamoto, the prefectural medical association coordinates smoothly amongst the four districts along with other governmental organs.

One of the most important activities headed by ToMA is the promotion of Continuing Medical Education (CME). Such activities continue to be well coordinated under the ToMA by the many committees responsible for this field.



Targets of the CME Activities

Throughout Japan, disparity not only in terms of economic aspects, but also in healthcare provision between cities and suburbs is growing. Furthermore in times of such healthcare crisis, the mass media continue to criticize without sufficient understanding of the actual medical conditions and litigation continues to increase even in cases where malpractice has not been founded; thus, medical practice has become increasingly difficult.

Admitting the difficulties, we have become more aware of the role of the physician in supporting a secure and stable society, and of our duty to continuously study and provide sound and compassionate care. The CME committee is fully engaged in assisting its membership to fulfill the following goals:

- 1) To keep up with the progress in medicine, and acquire standard medical knowledge and techniques
- 2) To cultivate a greater sense of ethical values and human rights as a trusted member of society
- 3) To support the community with team-work

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This article is a revised English version of a paper originally published in the Journal of the Japan Medical Association (Vol.136, No.8, 2007, pages 1562–1563).

through coordination between hospitals and clinics

- 4) To provide high-transparency healthcare services

Current Efforts

The CME committee handles clinical residency issues as well. Many members of the hospital-based physicians committee also serve on the Tottori Prefecture Diabetes Action Council, and by taking an integrated view of physician's life-long studies and research, many projects are planned and executed annually. To accommodate and cooperate with the new postgraduate clinical training program launched in 2004, the ToMA provides all residents membership free of charge for the first two years.

Presently, the following programs are in operation:

Medical Congresses of ToMA

ToMA holds two congresses annually, which rotate from east to middle to west districts of the prefecture. The congresses feature invited guest lectures and general lectures, with many of the latter given by second-year residents at teaching hospitals. We hope and aim for medical association members such as general practitioners taking on more opportunities of the congresses.

“The Journal of ToMA” (The Journal of ToMA Editorial Board)

First published in 1971, the journal has reached its 35th volume. Owing to the efforts of the editorial board, which conducts peer-reviews, this journal has published four issues per year. Since 2004, the journal has become more popular by starting with an A4-size format, new cover, new-type font, and updated content. We are inviting more members to contribute to this journal to enhance its quality further.

Training workshops for mentors

In order to provide a training program attractive to the residents, since 2004 ToMA has sponsored an annual training workshop for mentors. In 2007, 22 doctors from resident hospitals and clinics, sorted into four-man task forces, attended the two-day workshop headed by Dr. Fukui Tsuguya including Dr. Kuramoto Aki and Dr. Fukumoto Youhei.

Participation in JMA's CME program

ToMA consistently has a high rate of participation in the CME program of JMA, with a membership rate of 84.3% in 2006. Although the membership rate is high, problems remain in that actual participation is left up to each member. To promote active participation, ToMA is willing to financially support its members. ToMA aims for attending doctors to come back and spread further knowledge on basic health issues especially concerning clinical practice.

Future Perspectives

Issues faced in rural areas include a lack of physicians, the lack of specialists, and the outflow of residents to cities. If this continues, in time there will be a severe shortage of physicians. Under such circumstances, we hope that medical students and young physicians understand how appealing the Tottori scene of many physicians working hard to achieve their mission in helping patients and the community, can be. Although proper evaluation and salary are important, the medical association must provide attractive opportunities for its members to help each other in establishing quality healthcare. We are seeking ways through the CME to appeal to many practitioners, female physicians, and young physicians for participation in the ToMA.