

History and theme of physical therapy (therapist) at Niigata University of Health and Welfare

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The training of physical therapists (PT) and occupational therapists (OT) began in May 1963, 38 years ago, at the National Sanatorium Tokyo Hospital Rehabilitation School in Kiyose-shi, Tokyo. There were several years of preparation period and movements. The white paper published by the National Department of Health and Welfare (currently Health, Welfare and Labour, 1960) documented the importance of medical rehabilitation as the 4th medicine while the 1st medicine for health promotion, 2nd medicine for disease prevention and 3rd medicine for cure of diseases and the indispensability of technician training. In 1961, Dr. Dasco in New York University visited and voiced the necessity of PT and OT in Japan. In 1962, discussion about training and regulation for establishment of training organizations for function therapy (therapists) and profession therapy (therapists) that are the precursors of PT and OT, were started. First Japanese PT・OT training facilities were opened as the result. The law for them became in effect in 1965 under the name of 「Regulation for physical therapists and occupational therapists」. In 1966, the first national examination was carried out and 183 PT and 20 OT passed the examination. In the same year, the Japanese Association of Physical Therapists was established with 110 members. The first meeting of the association was held in Tokyo University under the title of 「PT management and operation」.

Today, after 39 years of physical therapists, an

unexpectedly huge increase of therapist number is causing a big problem. As of August 2001, we have 131 training schools with 4903 students. The number of four-year university is twenty with total number of students of 620. In 「statement for estimation of demand and supplies of physical therapists and occupational therapists」 issued from the office of health management of Department of Health and Welfare on December 4, 2000 says that the estimated demand for PT will be 46,000 while supply will be 37,200 but the admission number will be 5500. Thus, the reverse of demand and supply within 2 or 3 years after the year of 2004 will be expected. The reason behind this phenomenon cannot be separated from our economic factors. Namely the direction towards relaxation of regulation due to our elderly society with small number of children, policy for health, medicine and welfare and our national economy are major factors. A quantitative increase of physical therapists is no doubt a strong power for development of medical rehabilitation; however, it created a big contradiction. To solve this, we may need great energy and new ideas.

In science, the theme of the 35th annual Meeting of the Japanese Association of Physical Therapists in 2000 was 「Effects of Physical Therapy」 and the 36th annual meeting was 「Physical Therapy in 21st Century」 reviews of clinic, education, and research. They are positively looking forward to the EBM

(evidence-based medicine: medicine based on scientific evidences). Japanese Association of Physical Therapists has been a leader making an effort to solve the problems in both science and professional areas (social status, payment, expansion of jobs etc.) for 37 years after the establishment. Because of such effort, great contributions to improve health, medical treatment and welfare of citizens can be made. Furthermore, the direction now is to develop activities in the 21st century by constructing a solid system in science and profession.

There were some notable problems responding to the needs in medical field during 20th century but physical therapy somehow overcame them. However, now we must consider the promotion of physical therapy in health and welfare that started rather late, in both quality and quantity. To answer these we must spend a large amount of our energy. We must maintain a better development in quantity and in quality by continuously responding each other in clinic, education and research, so that an effective collaboration between medicine and health-welfare becomes better correlated. Then, the effective cooperation will be established.

Niigata University of Health and Welfare, Niigata Rehabilitation Hospital and the Aikoukai Institute of Health and Welfare must be the bases contributing to the Quality of Life (QOL) for all people, prefecture and local area by linking and organizing the health, medicine and welfare. It is imperative for Niigata Society of Health and Welfare to act in such environment. This is my simple comment on history and current theme of physical therapy (therapists) in front of the first scientific meeting.