

# **Research into the Health and Welfare that Underpin Social Life: From the Quarter-Century History and Future Prospects of the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work**

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## **1. Introduction**

The society's first academic meeting was held 26 years ago in Kyoto. In the section entitled "On the Publication of the Journal," which was the preface to the society's journal at the time, MATSUMOTO Hisae (the society's first managing director) wrote, "It is my hope that this society will serve as a venue for the pursuit of scholarship that supports human 'life and living' and strives for 'happiness' by means of science that is derived from not only theory, but practice as well." This statement represents its hope for the growth of the society while also clearly expressing general concepts indicating the direction in which the society would head.

Since then, its members have steadily continued on with their activities and the society has grown to the point of celebrating its 26th academic conference. This paper is an attempt to make a few inquiries into the society's future prospects by reflecting back over this process and outlining the society's activities to date, as well as the research domains and themes that have been presented by its members thus far.

This paper was compiled in reference to the prior research by OKAZAKI Michiko (2007) with some additions and revisions.

## **2. Activities of the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work to Date**

### **1) Main Themes of the Society's Academic Conferences**

With respect to the nationwide academic conferences by the society, since its first conference in 1986 the society has continued to hold 26 such conferences down to the present, with each conference convened in regions all around the country every year (as of FY2012). This section will confirm the direction that the society has aspired to head in by providing an overview of the themes and contents of the nationwide academic conferences thus far.

For the first through sixth conferences the themes included: "What Ties Nursing and Welfare Together?" "Tangents between Nursing and Welfare," "Modalities for Nursing and Welfare that Are Responsive to the Aging Society," "Peace of Mind as Quality of Life in the Aging Society," and "Modalities and Challenges for Family Support concerning the Aging Society and Family Functions." As these demonstrate, examinations of and research presentations on human being's social behavior and health behavior were undertaken through lectures from interdisciplinary viewpoints based on the fields of nursing and welfare studies.

For the seventh conference, as a first step in the direction of nursing and welfare studies, nursing and medical-related lecturers who were practitioners of nursing education and in the field of health and medical care were invited. They considered nursing and welfare studies with respect

to human rights, ethics, and the rights of and assurances for children with severe mental and physical disabilities.

Starting with the eighth conference the themes of “Issues concerning Long-Term Care Insurance and Elder Care in the Future” and “Living Support and Nursing/Welfare: Challenges Brought about by the Shortening of Hospital Stays” were explored with a view towards the adoption of the long-term care insurance system from April 2000.

The tenth through 19th conferences pursued challenges found within those practices geared towards establishing nursing welfare studies for nursing and welfare as psychological sciences that are grounded in people’s humanity and the individual nature of this humanity under the theme of “The Role of Experts in the 21st Century Nursing and Welfare.” Moreover, the concept of QOL and modalities for care seen from the theme “Quality of Life from the Perspective of Service Users” were explored in the theme “Questioning the Origins of Human Relations.”

For the 20th conference the society wanted to perform a multidisciplinary examination of care capable of responding in specific ways to questions posed by the origins of human relations with a view towards creating nursing and welfare studies. As such, it attempted to explore the course of clinical research through horticultural therapy and musical therapy under the theme of “Classic yet New Holistic Care.”

The conference themes for the 21st through 25th conferences included “Clinical Knowledge that Supports People Living in Local Communities,” “Integrating the Nursing and Welfare that will Support the Super-Aging Society,” “Human Connections that Underpin Dignity,” and “Sustaining the Spiritual: Confirming the Significance of Being Alive.” Such conferences have attempted to offer social recommendations on support from social dimensions for those receiving nursing and welfare care, as well as religious dimensions added on to nursing and welfare concerning the psychological and spiritual care inherent to the individual.

The 26th conference explored comprehensive cooperation and support from a generic perspective under the theme of “The Importance of Cooperating with People in Other Occupational Categories in Health, Medical Care, and Welfare Services.” This was designed to explore the potential for health, medical care, and welfare services for recipients who exist in the gaps between these fields, a segment which is growing increasingly diverse and complex.

As the above indicates, the society’s academic conferences have developed by pursuing modalities for comprehensive community care that are aimed at boosting QOL, through invoking and applying scholarship in health, welfare, and medical care as well as neighboring fields, around the axis of challenges in daily life experienced by care recipients. In other words, our organization’s development attests that recipients are perceived of as ordinary people and ongoing advice has been given to society while seeking out specific modalities for supporting them.

## **2) Chronology of the Founding of the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work and Its History**

In January 1984 research sessions were launched, and at the same time consideration was given to creating an organization for these research sessions and rules for them. The research sessions were

held once every three months primarily in the suburbs of Kyoto and Kobe. Beginning in July 1988 sessions for presenting research results were held once a year, with these going under the name of the Nationwide Convention on Japanese Nursing and Welfare Research. What is more, a book containing the results of these research sessions entitled *Integrating Nursing and Welfare* was compiled along with a translated book entitled *Origins of Nursing*, both of which were published by Aikawa Books.

In June 2002 the research sessions were reorganized into a formal academic society, with its name slightly modified at the same time, and the Eighth Nationwide Conference of the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work was held in Kyoto. Due to the particulars of its founding, emphasis was placed on building up the number of research sessions that served as the parent body to the society, and so the number of society conferences hewed closely to those of the research sessions, marking their 26th such conference this fiscal year.

At the 19th Science Council of Japan on September 13, 2002 the registration application for the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work was approved as an academic research organization. It was registered to the First Section on Social Welfare and Social Security and was also enrolled in the Japanese Liaison Committee for Nursing Studies Research, which enabled it to embark upon its academic progress both in name and in reality. However, on account of reforms following in the wake of the partial revisions to the Act on Science Council of Japan from 2005, in FY2006 the conventional Japanese Liaison Committee for Nursing Studies Research was renamed to the Japan Association of Nursing Academies (JANA; approved at the extraordinary general assembly on September 26, 2005). The goal for which JANA was founded was to support activities for nursing-related academic societies and nursing studies researchers, on which it newly embarked and has continued to pursue down to the present. The society takes part in the JANA Member Academic Meetings, as well as the Japanese Association of Social Welfare Academic Societies, the Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies, and more. By cooperating with other academic societies in neighboring fields it plays a role in producing intellectual property.

### **3) The Society's Goals**

Article 3 of the Society's Bylaws stipulates that the society will promote research related to nursing and welfare as well as mutual coordination and cooperation with researchers and practitioners. It will also strive to maintain ties with academic societies both in Japan and overseas, thereby contributing to the welfare of human societies. As such, it contributes to: (1) performing research related to nursing and welfare, (2) promoting mutual coordination and cooperation with researchers and practitioners, and (3) striving to maintain ties with academic societies both in Japan and overseas.

With regard to (1) research related to nursing and welfare, the thinking is that creative research activities will be important for erecting nursing and welfare studies, and for this the accumulation of knowledge that is grounded in practical activities will be essential. For (2) promoting mutual coordination and cooperation with researchers and practitioners, the thinking is that it will be important to convey and utilize nursing and welfare studies. In other words, this will entail

translating research results into practice while placing emphasis on education, as well as conducting investigative analyses on modalities for these practices. As for (3) striving to maintain ties with academic societies both in Japan and overseas, the thinking is that contributions to society by means of utilizing the academic results will be important while pursuing nursing and welfare studies by repeatedly brainstorming together with other related academic societies.

The Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work has implemented the following efforts in order to achieve the objectives mentioned above. It holds nationwide academic conferences once a year and publishes an academic journal twice annually. The society needs to make more of an effort in order to promote its growth with respect to the holding of research sessions sponsored by its Academic Exchange Department and other events. For the future, there are plans to set up a grant-in-aid scheme for research within the society, as well as to offer advice to society based on discussions from a generic perspective regarding health, welfare, and medical care.

#### **4) Number of Members**

As of July 8, 2012 the society had 360 members (FY2012 general assembly report, held at Bunkyo University).

### **3. Research Trends Seen in Attitude Surveys on Members of the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work**

#### **1) Nursing and Welfare Research Subjects**

When it comes to nursing and welfare research subjects, a look at the top three positions reveals that 13 people listed users of medical care services, nine people said everyone with challenges in their daily lives, and nine people said users of welfare services.

It is presumed that since nurses accounted for 31 of the 42 people (74%), users of medical care services accounted for the majority of these responses. Moreover, this could also be described as a reflection of the aging society from the year 1995 onwards. The large percentage of responses that perceive of coordination and cooperation between nursing and welfare as a targeted issue for the creation of nursing and welfare studies is thought to be a reflection of social phenomena that are growing increasingly difficult for a single specialist to handle on their own.

From the fact that the fewest responses were those that used the physically disabled as research subjects at four people, this could be interpreted as being an undeveloped area as a targeted subject for investigations into nursing and welfare studies.

#### **2) Sites of Nursing and Welfare Activities**

As for the sites of nursing and welfare activities, those listed for the top three spots were communities and homes by 27 people, welfare-related facilities by 14 people, and hospitals by 13 people.

This is believed to be a result of the fact that the notion of normalization, whereby the elderly and disabled live in amongst local communities, has become widespread, and those offering assistance have adopted this perspective. What is more, since people have a strong desire to spend

the end of their lives in places where they have grown accustomed to living, there is awareness that communities and homes serve as locations for nursing and welfare studies activities that are capable of ensuring people's QOL while these activities also cover the perspectives of welfare facilities and hospitals. Nowadays the functions of nursing studies are expanding, and such activities are being deployed both in name and deed over a wide-ranging conceptual framework that includes everything from in-hospital nursing care to communities, homes, and welfare facilities. In the nursing studies educational curriculums at nursing colleges that have proliferated since the 1990s, efforts have been made to round out nursing education that is centered around nursing care which closely connects hospitals, homes, and communities by converting bedside training to clinical training and public health nursing studies to community nursing studies. As such, it could also be surmised that this has been reflected in these sorts of results.

### **3) Terminology Representing Nursing and Welfare**

When the question was posed to list three words that are appropriate for representing nursing and welfare, the top four terms were QOL from 17 people, nursing from 15 people, coordination from 13 people, and care/caring from 11 people.

These results can be taken to mean that integrating nursing and welfare into a single concept rather than seeing them each as distinct concepts allow for the specific implementation of the ideals and practical activities that are embodied in each of these concepts respectively. It also implies that there are many people who think that it can contribute in an academic sense to allowing people to lead happy lives.

### **4) Direction that Members would Like to Head in with their Research**

By referencing the themes that have been investigated and researched by the academic journal these can be broadly broken down into three trends: ethical and philosophical orientations, the activities of practitioners, and the development of knowledge and techniques that allow specialists to carry out their duties in order to meet the demands of contemporary society.”

### **5) Future Prospects for Nursing and Welfare Academic Societies**

Based on the aforementioned survey results and considerations, this section will present a few tentative assumptions regarding the future prospects for nursing and welfare studies.

(1) There is a need to collect and systematize additional information based on an integrated concept of nursing and welfare rather than seeing these as distinct concepts. This will necessitate research on both art and science. In other words, it could be pointed out that for nursing and welfare studies one pressing challenge will be the production of philosophical and scientific expertise that will clearly delineate what the aims are.

(2) In order to construct this concept of nursing and welfare studies, the first thing will be to look at the health, medical care, and welfare facilities of today. This viewpoint refers to the domains of primary care, emergency and first-aid care, care via advanced medical treatments and specialized sections, short-term and palliative care, care related to rehabilitation, welfare facility care, and home

welfare care. These seven respective sections undertake the role of providing distinctive care to the recipients. But when the recipients and their families are made the center of the considerations, then the question becomes one of whether said recipients will be able to receive assistance that ensures their QOL in the homes and communities where they live. Development of research methods that will lead to appropriate solutions to this question in each care section can be thought of as a contemporary challenge. In the initial stages, starting out by examining precedent cases and with descriptions of care phenomena should provide steady efforts towards this end. The presumption is that the results of this can be used in reflecting upon aid techniques and striving to improve aid techniques that ensure people's QOL, which can lead to the provision of practical activities that are backed up by scientific knowledge.

(3) One important challenge is to have the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work provide recommendations for evidence-based policies. At the same time as providing a big-picture outlook that places emphasis on policies for society as a whole, we must not forget to go about thoroughly describing aid processes and practical activities that aim for the personal perspective of QOL. In doing so it will be important to constantly consider coordination and cooperation with professionals who are engaged in the seven care sections described above. It will be essential that each professional specialist fulfills his/her duties while understanding the roles of each section and staying in close contact with the others. With respect to leadership in such situations and the question of which professions are ideal for this, it will be essential to confirm the main complaints from the nursing and welfare recipients and their families, while also verifying what needs there are for the challenges in their lives from a broad perspective.

Health Japan 21 presented specific health indicators. Regarding the revisions to the long-term care insurance, now that 12 years have elapsed since the introduction of the system and the system has undergone modifications based on social surveys and deliberations, we are now thought to be in a time when each and every member accepts the role played by the society in this with modesty. The expectation is that they will promote individual research, while also voluntarily launching research projects.

(4) Developing practical activities that can contribute to improving people's health and welfare poses a research challenge for nursing and welfare studies, with the ultimate objective of this being the pursuit of happiness for humankind. Having a healthy mind and body and being able to fulfill one's roles as a human being to the extent possible gives people a true sense of being happy. In other words, this is also represented as the pursuit of shared challenges between nursing studies and welfare studies as well as challenges in their border regions. In the future, we must play a role as a driving force for developing the new and integrated academic discipline of nursing and welfare studies together with researchers in multiple fields that are needed for the studies. In this sense as well, the society should offer a place for their mutual cultivation in an interdisciplinary and clinical sense, with this including adjacent regions to nursing and welfare, consolidate the new energy that this produces, and contribute to laying the foundation for the formation of a new academic discipline.

#### **4. Erecting the General Concept for Nursing and Welfare Studies**

The society not only engages itself in logical investigations but also respects sensibilities and emotions, and thus pursues non-contradictory scientific characteristics for the discipline by at times undertaking research techniques of the natural sciences that are grounded in practical activities. It respects the “humanity” that people are innately imbued with and provides them comfort, while at the same time also being capable of supporting people in making it through life by encouraging their independence. The society will pursue these two ways of conceptualizing of the matter. The following issues can be listed as the research techniques, targets, and fields for this.

##### **1) What Constitutes Nursing and Welfare Studies as a Science?**

- This involves investigating the logic of an issue and being able to explain it using logic. It also involves being able to demonstrate truth through causal relationships. In other words, this entails clarifying unique and creative knowledge in the nursing and welfare domain by invoking and applying sciences adjoining the two disciplines of nursing and welfare while also demonstrating the evidence for them.

##### **2) What Constitutes Nursing and Welfare Studies that Respect Sensibilities and Emotions?**

- It cannot be explained by logic. Something that is outright beautiful is just beautiful; even if you try to explain why it is beautiful you will be unable to convey this. The beauty that someone experiences from being raised within their own cultural environment cannot be experienced in the same way by someone else.
- Japanese culture is subtly attuned to nature itself. The people live their lives from day to day with a perception of this subtlety along with the changing of the four seasons. Things like beautiful flowers, the chirping of small birds, the timbre of insects, and the sound of spring water flowing down a gorge can be experienced and perceived within people’s daily lives. The Japanese people have lived in such an environment for countless years. Their sensitivity to nature has taken root deep within the public like a tree notched with age rings, and is unconsciously incorporated into their daily lives.

- *The ancient pond/ A frog leaps in/ The sound of the water*

This is a haiku by MATSUO Basho. Readers of this verse most likely imagine a scene of a frog leaping into a pond at an old temple in the middle of a deserted forest. Therein is contained a mentality of experiencing stillness and quiet. Moreover, it also reverberates with a sound that cannot be explained through the diverse experiences of individual people, and people can get a sense for its lingering reverberations.

As the above demonstrates, this includes phenomena that exist in the relationships between people and other people, people and life, and people and locations.

##### **3) People, Scope, and Locations (Fields) Targeted by Nursing and Welfare Studies for Research**

- The elderly continue to amass memories and experiences as if they were the warp and woof for weaving their lives thus far into a tapestry. These are discussed through items imbued with nostalgic memories, their love for their birthplaces, their love for their families, and their love for

humankind, and through the intercession of people listening carefully their memories can be drawn out more vividly.

- It is necessary to adopt new viewpoints and sensibilities regarding the importance of questioning the significance of achieving a sense of respect for the lives of the late elderly people at medical care and welfare facilities.
- The question of how respect for the human rights of all people should be reflected in each and every educational setting is an important research topic. This includes creating assistance structures for supporting the independence of the physically handicapped, as well as creating networks concerning abuse (of the elderly, the physically handicapped, and children, as well as between couples and parents and children).

## **5. Activities for the Great East Japan Earthquake**

Following the unprecedented major earthquake disaster that occurred on March 11, 2011, the society carried out fund-raising activities and awareness-raising activities through academic conferences and other initiatives by both the society's organization and at the individual level in the interest of supporting reconstruction.

This section will attempt to report to some extent on two of the dynamic reconstruction volunteer activities by the society members, which are (1) assistance with relief supplies and (2) aid activities in the stricken regions.

### **1) Sorting Relief Supplies**

(1) Period: March 19 and 21, 2011

(2) Location of activities: Tosu General Government Office Building, Saga Prefecture (Tosu City, Saga Prefecture)

(3) Organization sponsoring the activities: Saga Prefectural Disaster Volunteer Center, Saga Prefecture

(4) Contents of main activities: receiving and sorting relief supplies from the local citizens and loading them into shipping trucks.

Appeals soliciting relief supplies were made within Saga Prefecture one week after the earthquake struck, but on account of factors like the regional characteristics of Tosu City relief supplies were also delivered from neighboring Fukuoka Prefecture. In addition, relief supplies like instant foods were also provided by companies located within an industrial park in Tosu City, thus affirming the spirit of cooperation found during states of emergency between local residents, companies, and others.

One matter that was noticed in the fields of nursing and welfare through the activities is that most of the relief supplies provided during emergencies are daily necessities that can be purchased from places like supermarkets. Of these, it was predicted that there would be shortages of items like diapers and women's sanitary products. However, the methods for counting quantities were not clearly defined; it was difficult to determine the needs of the intended users; and the methods for getting a handle on the daily necessities and other goods from health, welfare, and medical care professionals and local residents differed. Therefore, clarifying the day-to-day baseline levels and



setting in place a support structure that can allocate supplies appropriately to the people and places that need them without overages or deficiencies in preparation for disasters can be pointed out as issues to be kept in mind.

## **2) Aid Activities in the Stricken Regions**

(1) Period: April 24 to 28, 2011

(2) Location of activities: Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture

(3) Organization sponsoring the activities: Saga Prefectural Disaster Volunteer Center, Saga Prefecture

(4) Organization cooperating in the activities: Iwaki Disaster Relief Volunteer Center

(5) Contents of main activities: gathering and providing information at victims' homes, holding hearings at evacuation shelters, and providing volunteer information.

In consideration for restoring the daily lives of the disaster victims, it is crucial to secure lifelines and share information on people requiring long-term care. Given the various different aid agencies working in the stricken regions, it was clear that there were imbalances in the aid in that some types of aid were supplied in abundance while conversely other types of aid were in short supply. One of the reasons for this was noted as being overlapping information.

In particular, because of the damage from the tsunami along coastal areas and the presumable scenarios in which this would create inadequacies in public health and sanitation, it will conceivably be necessary to erect structures that can handle multilayered relationships effectively when it comes to lifestyle support and support for health aspects for the residents who go back to living there. Moreover, in cases where the family vehicles people used as their ordinary means of transportation were washed away and they lost their means of getting around, difficult cases were often observed whereby people had problems with going shopping or going to medical exams as part of their daily lives. In terms of medical care in particular, there were medical teams that would have liked to have responded right away, but were unable to do so due to the fact that adequate structures for things like coordination with the local communities had not been set in place. For this reason, the necessity of coordination for medical care, nursing, and welfare became clear from the actual conditions in the stricken regions from both the dimensions of prevention and after-care.

## **3) Nursing and Welfare Approach in Stricken Regions**

As was mentioned above, medical care and nursing approach for saving the lives of people that require emergency care following the occurrence of a major earthquake is needed in stricken regions. One pressing challenge is to use this to respond to the loss of appetite, insomnia, and shaking that occurs in people whose physical conditions have declined considerably, as well as acute stress disorder (ASD) whereby people experience mental and physical pain produced by stress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) produced from shocking events such as major earthquakes. What is more, a variety of different nursing and psychological approaches are required that include handling the depression associated with such tragedies that leads to social withdrawal, anthropophobia, and suicide.

At the same time, support must also be provided for the psychosocial issue of survivor's guilt, whereby those who survive feel a sense of guilt over their own existence in response to the people around them who perished in the earthquake. In addition, responses for things like grief counseling to disaster victims who harbor a profound sense of loss, such as children, juveniles, elderly people, and physically handicapped people who have lost family, is a serious challenge. These can be affirmed as being secondary and tertiary forms of damage produced by the earthquake.

In addition to this, when it comes to social support for the victims there are also needs for things like providing supplies, restoring lifelines, and securing living spaces through temporary housing and the like. Regarding the concentrated mobilization of social resources for these emergency measures, rapid countermeasures will be needed in conjunction with political and economic trends, which will surely be an appraisal of the state of Japan's social security.

At the same time, coordination over structures for linkages and cooperation between formal support and informal support, such as cooperation among civilian volunteers, will be important. This will likely offer an opportunity to reveal the level of maturity that Japan's social welfare has reached.

The emergency and long-term challenges brought about by the occurrence of the Great East Japan Earthquake fall under the field of nursing and welfare and require multilayered social support through things like networks of different occupational categories. In other words, it is under these sorts of situations when we can get a feel for the social mission of the Japanese Society for the Study of Nursing and Social Work.

When it comes to the pursuit of people's health and welfare, the society does not perceive ordinary people solely from the dimensions of physical medicine and nursing. Instead, in addition to these physical aspects it has aimed to achieve total, holistic care that encompasses psychological, intellectual, and social dimensions. Its history of holding nationwide academic conferences a total of 26 times and continuously publishing 18 volumes of its academic journal as of the present could be regarded as proof of this.

Now is the time to clarify the social *raison d'être* for our society. To do so we should have everyone from the society's managing director down to its executives and members join together in response to reconstruction for the Great East Japan Earthquake to discover scientific research and practice modalities for the current state of the victims, while promoting the society's work of surmising the disaster victims' true needs.

## **6. Conclusion**

From our society's progress of more than a quarter of a century thus far we have been able to ascertain the need to have nursing and welfare studies support people's lives in and of themselves, as well as the need for cooperation between health, welfare, and medical care for preventative and emergency assistance during disasters. For the future we will place emphasis on researching holistic care and setting our sites on "pursuing care that does not deplete people's natural healing powers" as can be found within Florence NIGHTINGALE's *Notes on Nursing*. Moreover, we will not stop in the further pursuit of interdisciplinary research on nursing and welfare studies by

striving for cooperation with ancillary fields in order to achieve the empowerment of the people we deal with and the protection of their rights.

## 7. Contact Information

The society is an academic society that fuses nursing with welfare. In striving for the pursuit of people's health and welfare it has continued to publish a research journal and hold nationwide academic meetings every year. We would be pleased if, in the future, organizations, individual researchers, and practitioners with an interest in social services for nursing and welfare to general public were to share information and engage in joint research in striving for academic partnerships with the society. We would like to ask those with such an interest to visit the following site.

<http://kangofukushi.sakura.ne.jp/>

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