

HICARE and its Activities over the Past 25 Years

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● Introduction

This organization is known as HICARE, an abbreviation taken mainly from the first letters of its English name, the Hiroshima International Council for Health Care of the Radiation Exposed. It was originally known by another Japanese abbreviation, but nowadays is more commonly called HICARE.

HICARE is a consortium comprised of eight agencies and two administrative agencies involved in the medical care of atomic bomb survivors and medical study on

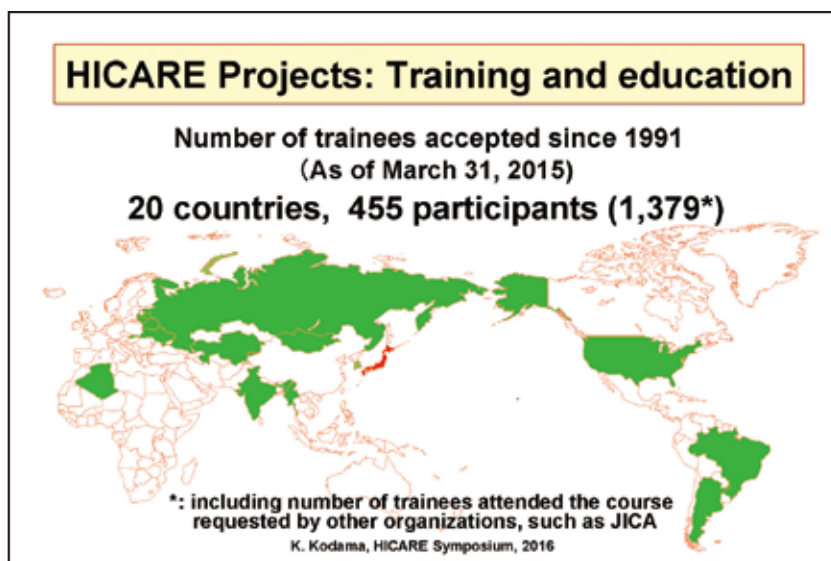
atomic bomb radiation exposure in Hiroshima. Specifically, it was established in 1991, consisting of Hiroshima University Faculty of Medicine, Hiroshima University Hospital, Hiroshima University Research Institute for Radiation Biology and Medicine, Radiation Effects Research Foundation, Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Casualty Council, Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital & Atomic-bomb Survivors Hospital, Hiroshima Prefectural Medical Association, Hiroshima City Medical Association, Hiroshima Prefecture, and Hiroshima City. Now, almost 25 years have passed since its founding, and it has made many significant contributions to medical care of the exposed around the world.



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● Purpose of Establishment

HICARE was established with the purpose of using the experience in treating atomic bomb survivors and the achievement of investigative research regarding radiation disorders gained by Hiroshima which were the first mankind to suffer from the atomic bombing tragedy, and creating a system to effectively apply that knowledge to medical care of radiation-exposed individuals both in Japan and overseas, thus allowing Hiroshima to contribute to the world and help promote international cooperation.



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● Activities and Achievements

HICARE's projects involves ①accepting training requests, ②dispatching experts, and ③enhancing public awareness, which can be further categorized into holding lectures and the like, and publishing.

① Accepting training requests

Potential training participants are physicians or other medical professionals engaged in medical care or health management for persons exposed to radiation. Accepting is done if applications are submitted by an international agency, foreign government, medical association, or other relevant organizations through a public agency in Japan. Training courses include radiation dosimetry, assessment of biological effects of radiation, diagnosis of radiation disorders, epidemiological and statistical methods, lasting from one week to three months. Training is carried out at the six agencies out of eight involved in the medical study and medical care of atomic bomb radiation comprising HICARE and at Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Foundation, and since HICARE's founding in 1991 until March 2015, we have accepted a total of 455 trainees from 20 countries. Also, if we include training carried out through requests from other organizations such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), that number of accepted persons reaches 1,379.

② Dispatching experts

From HICARE's establishment until March 2015, we have dispatched a total of 201 experts to 16 countries, in Asia, North America, Central and South America, and Europe. The purpose of dispatching is to hold training seminars and provide technical guidance related to medical care for individuals exposed to radiation, as well as for attending international conferences including Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network (REMPAN) meetings run by the World Health Organization (WHO), conferences related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident, and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) international conferences, etc.

Furthermore, we also dispatched experts to radiation disasters in Japan, namely the Tokaimura nuclear accident in 1999 and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in 2011. For the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in 2011, we formed a radiation dosimetry team consisting of 6 members, who were radiation technologists and nurses, and carried out measurements of evacuees' dosages and offered health consultation.

③ Enhancing public awareness

a) Holding lectures, etc.

At HICARE, we have held lectures to spread awareness of the significance and necessity for promoting international cooperation related to medical care for radiation-exposed individuals. In the past ten years, we have held the HICARE Symposium in the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing (2005), International Symposium Commemorating the 15th Anniversary of HICARE (2006), the International Cooperation Symposium of Medical Care for the Radiation-exposed (2008), and the HICARE International Symposium - in cooperation with the IAEA (2011). Lectures are open to the public and many residents attended.

b) Publishing projects

The other pillar of our projects for enhancing public awareness is our publishing. First, "Effect of A-bomb Radiation on the Human Body 1992", a handbook of the medical care for A-bomb survivors, was published in 1992, one year after HICARE was founded. This handbook was written for people engaged in medical care; however, it covered all the latest knowledge at that time, and it is no exaggeration to say that this medical handbook was a white paper on medical treatment of atomic bomb survivors. An English version was also published in 1995. Then, in 2012, results from later research were included for a full revision, and "The Effects of A-Bomb Radiation on the Human Body 2nd Revised Edition" was published.

As stated, HICARE has continued to make steady efforts since its founding, and those efforts have gained several recognitions.

First, in 1996, five years after our founding, we received the Public Health Award. In 2006, 15 years after our founding, we received the Foreign Minister's Commendation Award, then in 2013, we received a letter of appreciation from the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare for our response to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident.

●Promoting new international contributions

In addition to the activities described thus far, HICARE began a new project in 2010.

On August 6, 2010, Yukiya Amano, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) visited Hiroshima, exchanging Practical Arrangements for collaboration in the medical treatment and research for radiation-exposed individuals, with the purpose of contributing to international peace and stability. In response, HICARE held the "Training Course on Biodosimetry" as a new effort in collaboration with IAEA in

Hiroshima in June 2013. IAEA dispatched the lecturers, and 15 trainees from various countries in Asia attended. Then, in October that year, we held a "Training Course on the Radiation Emergency Medicine" in Hiroshima in collaboration with IAEA, with 31 trainees from Asia and the Pacific attending.

Through these kinds of activities, our collaboration with IAEA has developed even further, and in May 2014, HICARE was designated as an IAEA Collaborating Centre for the "Capacity Building in Radiation Effects and Human Health" project. It was the first time a consortium organization like HICARE was designated as an IAEA Collaborating Centre.

Then, in January 2015, "HICARE/IAEA International Training Course IAEA/RCA Regional Training Course: An update on Advanced Technologies in Radiotherapy" was held in Hiroshima, with 27 trainees from Asia and the Pacific.

Also, aiming to cultivate human resources that will make international contributions in the future, HICARE decided to dispatch medical students to the IAEA intern program, and dispatched two students from the Hiroshima University Faculty of Medicine, each for three months, from October 2013 and October 2015. While the dispatching period was short, it provided a perfect opportunity for gaining an international perspective, and we plan to continue this in the future.

●Conclusion

As I have described, throughout the almost 25 years since its founding in 1991, HICARE has developed its project of accepting training requests, dispatching experts, and enhancing public awareness, working to apply the experience in treating atomic bomb survivors and the achievement of investigative research regarding effects of radiation gained by Hiroshima to medical care of radiation-exposed individuals both in Japan and overseas. Furthermore, we have begun collaborative project with



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IAEA in recent years, bringing HICARE's activities to a new level. In the future, we hope to continue and expand these efforts, cooperating with the Nagasaki Association for Hibakushas' Medical Care (NASHIM), which works for the same goals, and further promote our contributions to humanity.