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TOHOKU MEDICAL MEGABANK ORGANIZATION

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Tohoku University
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Findings from the FY2013 Long-term Community Child Health Study

Tohoku University Tohoku Medical Megabank Organization (ToMMo) conducted a questionnaire survey, part of our “long-term community child health study,” from Friday, June 7, 2013 in southern Miyagi Prefecture. The purpose of this study is to address the health needs of children who are at risk of increased illnesses or a worsening of symptoms following the Great East Japan Earthquake. Specifically, the study is designed to:

1. Assess the health status of children and develop measures to meet their needs;
2. Provide appropriate support to children with health concerns; and
3. Find children as quickly as possible whose symptoms and prognosis will improve with cutting-edge medical support services*.

*If diagnosis deems it necessary, or in the case of refractory disease and the development of a new treatment method is necessary, cutting-edge medical support services may be provided to relevant children as a separate project. In such cases, a detailed test that includes gene analysis will be performed, with the consent of the children’s parents or guardians.

Description of ToMMo’s Long-term Community Child Health Study

■Target Area

Shiroishi City, Natori City, Kakuda City, Iwanuma City, Zao Town, Shichikashuku Town, Ogawara Town, Murata Town, Shibata Town, Kawasaki Town, Marumori Town, Watari Town, and Yamamoto Town.

■Sample

The “Children’s Health Questionnaire” was distributed through public primary and junior high schools in the target area, to 12,742 children and students in the second, fourth, and sixth grades of primary school as well as in the second year of junior high school. The children and students brought home the questionnaire, and 4,068 parents or guardians (number of effective responses) filled out and returned the questionnaire.

■Outline of FY2013 Study Findings

In terms of respiratory and skin symptoms, 378 children had symptoms of bronchial asthma, and 866 children had symptoms of atopic dermatitis. Of the children who were not receiving any treatment or diagnosis despite having strong symptoms, 27 children had bronchial asthma, and 37 children had atopic dermatitis. A Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was conducted to study the psychological health of children. It found that 606 children experience some form of difficulty in their daily lives and are deemed to require assistance. The aggregate findings from the questionnaire survey were notified to municipalities for the purpose of improving their health administration.

■FY2013 Supports

If requested by parents or guardians, and as necessary, public health nurses and psychologists provided mental and physical health counseling, among other supports at the Community Support Iwanuma Center and the Community Support Shiroishi Center of ToMMo. Telephone counseling was provided to 1,497 children who may have severe symptoms (mental health counseling: 1,008 children; physical health counseling: 474 children). Face-to-face meetings were also held as requested.

■FY2012 Preliminary Survey

A preliminary survey of the long-term community child health study was conducted from November 2012. Questionnaires were distributed at public primary and junior high schools in Iwanuma City, Watari Town, and Yamamoto Town in Miyagi Prefecture. The questionnaires were returned by postal mail by the parents or guardians of approximately 40% of the children and students. The findings found that there were children who may have illnesses, including bronchial asthma, atopic dermatitis, PTSD, and pervasive developmental disorders (PDD). With regard to treatment, the survey discovered that there were children who had severe symptoms of bronchial asthma but nevertheless stopped their treatments due to the earthquake and tsunami disaster, and that they have not been able to resume their treatments even after nearly two years have passed since the disaster.

■The long-term community child health study is being implemented by a Tohoku Medical Megabank Project, as part of the three-generation cohort study.

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