

JNA News Release

Japanese Nursing Association

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Toward the G7 Hiroshima Summit and Nagasaki Health Ministers' Meeting: JNA submitted recommendations to the Japanese government

On February 21, 2023, Dr. Toshiko Fukui, President of the Japanese Nursing Association, submitted to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) "Recommendations for the G7 Hiroshima Summit and Health Ministers' Meeting in 2023 – Establishing a more resilient system for providing healthcare to better realize UHC" as a document addressed to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare Katsunobu Kato.

In May 2023, Japan will host the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, and the Health Ministers' Meeting in Nagasaki. The G7 countries have been committed to the promotion of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as one of its key issues. Under this circumstance, hosting these G7 meetings in Japan is hugely symbolic and it demonstrates the need for global cooperation regarding healthcare policies. Japan is recognized as having achieved UHC relatively early in comparison to other countries through the realization of a universal health insurance system.

Nevertheless, in recent years, it has been a social challenge and is under discussion on how to reform the healthcare system to sustain and strengthen the UHC.

Reflecting on the experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and the global trend of rapidly declining birthrates and aging populations, President Fukui made recommendations on the following three key points for discussion at the G7 Summit and the Health Ministers' Meeting. The recommendations emphasized that it is vital to secure nurses, the largest group of professionals in healthcare systems, and promote their active role in strengthening systems and realizing UHC.

Recommendation 1: Secure the workforce for healthcare services to realize and strengthen UHC

Recommendation 2: Establish more effective and efficient healthcare systems (promotion of innovation)

Recommendation 3: Increase investment in healthcare to develop a better system



JNA President Fukui (left) hands the recommendations to Mr. Tomita, Senior Assistant Minister of MHLW

The recommendations were handed by President Fukui to Mr. Nozomi Tomita, Senior Assistant Minister of MHLW. Mr. Tomita also expressed the recognition of the need to secure the health workforce

in terms of both quantity and quality, and exchanged views on the issues to be discussed at the G7 Summit and the Health Ministers' Meeting. Dr. Eiji Hinoshita, Assistant Minister for Global Health and Welfare of MHLW, also joined the meeting and stated regarding these G7 meetings that one of the pillars of the action plan for UHC would be to secure health workforce, and that the high international interest in public health nurses in Japan could also be a point of discussion.

Through these recommendations, the Japanese Nursing Association will, under the leadership of the G7, work to further strengthen nursing efforts with the aim of sustaining and strengthening UHC in Japan and achieving UHC in the rest of the world.



February 21, 2023

**Recommendations for the G7 Hiroshima Summit and Health Ministers' Meeting in 2023
– Establishing a more resilient system for providing healthcare to better realize UHC –**

Japanese Nursing Association

President Toshiko Fukui

The population of Japan is aging and birth rates are declining more than anywhere else in the world, leading to fears that there will be weaker bases of social support and more complex inequality in the future. Furthermore, regarding healthcare, the expansion and diversification of the population requiring care has not only brought to light the increase in the quantity of needs, but also the increase in complexity in terms of quality. In response to this situation, the Japanese government is advancing "community-based integrated care systems" as a national policy to support home care for the elderly. Discussions are also underway regarding the creation of a social security system not only for the elderly, but for all generations, including children, people with disabilities, people in needs, and healthy people with potential needs.

Japan is recognized as having achieved UHC relatively early in comparison to other countries. Therefore, discussions based on real experiences revolving around system reforms aimed at sustaining and strengthening UHC serve for realizing UHC more widely in other countries and regions around the world.

In addition, after three years of tackling COVID-19, we have reaffirmed the importance of social infrastructure, and strongly shared this view with society as a whole. Above all, the healthcare system is an essential infrastructure of the highest priority, as it is directly linked to the lives and health of people in the community. There is unanimous agreement that normal operation of the system must be made sufficiently stable and resilient so that it can be maintained and continue to function effectively under any circumstances. Experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic will provide specific suggestions that can be used in discussions regarding the healthcare systems upon which future UHC will depend.

In light of the above, we hope that the G7 Summit and health ministers' meeting in Japan will set an agenda that focuses particularly on the following perspectives, and provide an opportunity to hold

effective discussions, based on the experience and knowledge gained in addressing the challenges of aging under UHC and in tackling the issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that we are currently facing.

Through these recommendations, the Japanese Nursing Association will, under the leadership of the G7, work to further strengthen nursing efforts with the aim of sustaining and strengthening UHC in Japan, and achieving UHC in the rest of the world.

Recommendation 1: Secure the workforce for healthcare services in order to realize and strengthen UHC

- Healthcare services that form the foundation of UHC are knowledge-intensive services in the sense that they are provided by professionals with specialized knowledge and skills in the area. Even with advancements in technology, there remains a constant need for services involving interpersonal interaction, which makes them considerably labor intensive as well.
- Healthcare systems in countries around the world have encountered many challenges during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, and the principal contributing factor in maintaining these systems has been the availability of healthcare professionals to provide services. We need to learn from this experience and take measures to guarantee a health workforce by ensuring a better working environment, including protecting and advocating them.
- All over the world, low birth rates and aging populations are issues that are rapidly becoming more severe. As a result, the quantity of people requiring healthcare is expected to increase, and their needs to become qualitatively more serious and complex. At the same time, it will also become more difficult to secure new entrants into the healthcare field. It is therefore necessary to improve the productivity of individual healthcare professionals, and there is also an urgent need to provide better education in order to train more qualified healthcare professionals.
- It is the responsibility of each country to ensure that healthcare professionals are effective in supporting people's health in terms of both quantity and quality, and to guarantee contributions to promote people's health. We look forward to discussions among G7 member nations that will drive initiatives and lead to the formation of a social consensus.
- The nursing profession is at the forefront of the healthcare system, as it is the largest professional body within it. Securing a workforce of nurses and promoting their advancement are essential

elements when it comes to strengthening healthcare systems around the world and realizing/sustaining UHC.*¹

Recommendation 2: Establish more effective and efficient healthcare systems (promotion of innovation)

- In order to realize and sustain UHC, it is also necessary to make healthcare systems more effective, efficient, and productive. In healthcare systems where doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals work together, it is important to consider how to demonstrate the ability of each specialization while also considering the effectiveness and efficiency of the system as a whole (overall optimization).
- Furthermore, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, more importance has been placed on health management and disease prevention than ever before. When discussing the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare systems, it is important to also reflect this shift in society's values concerning health.
- Taking into account that it will be difficult to secure new entrants into the professions as birth rates continue to decline, it will become more important than ever to discuss overall optimization of the system. From this point of view, we hope that the G7 member nations will engage in discussions to promote innovation that is not bound by existing frameworks, resulting in healthcare systems that can contribute better to society.
- In addition, regarding the need to strengthen the healthcare systems that form the foundation of UHC in societies with low birth rates and aging populations, it is clear that nursing is a profession that contributes to the health of the entire population and drives overall optimization of the system, even in response to the shift in society's values concerning health due to COVID-19. As the nursing profession's approach takes perspectives of both medical care and living, it can be effectively applied to wider populations in the community. Also, as locations for treatment and recuperation expand through the community, the nursing profession can play an even greater role. It is therefore desirable to hold more flexible discussions on regulations and the division of roles to allow nurses to do more while taking each specialization into account.

¹According to a report by the U.K.'s All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health titled "Triple Impact: How developing nursing will improve health, promote gender equality and support economic growth" (Oct. 2016), "Nurses are by far the largest part of the professional health workforce and achieving universal health coverage globally will depend on them being able to use their knowledge and skills to the full. Yet they are too often undervalued and their contribution underestimated." The report goes on to say that, "Increasing the number of nurses, and developing nursing so that nurses can achieve their potential, will also have the wider triple impact of improving health, promoting gender equality and supporting economic growth." (<http://www.appg-globalhealth.org.uk/home/4556655530>)

Recommendation 3: Increase investment in healthcare to develop a better system

- As mentioned above, UHC depends on healthcare systems, and the heart of these systems is health workforce. Increased investment in healthcare is essential to ensure a health workforce quantitatively and qualitatively, and to develop human resources with the capacity to promote innovation.
- We trust the leadership of the G7 member nations in building a social consensus on the importance of investing in healthcare, especially in specialists in these fields, in order to realize/sustain UHC.
- We also hope that there will be discussions regarding increasing investment in nursing and the nursing profession, taking into account the fact that nursing is an essential element for realizing and sustaining UHC.