



Newsletter Vol.33 (Jul 17, 2024)

from Japan Suicide Countermeasures Promotion Center



Thank you for registering for this newsletter of Japan Suicide Countermeasures Promotion Center (JSCP). This issue features articles related to the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) Asia Pacific Conference that was held in Bangkok, Thailand, this past June. It also includes reports from symposiums and research presentations by JSCP staff, as well as reports on other themes related to suicide countermeasures that were presented from around the world. Please also take note of the “Staff Interview” section, which is a first for this newsletter.

In addition, there is a report on a symposium from the 120th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology where Yasuyuki Shimizu, Representative Director, made a presentation, and on international exchange. We encourage you to read this issue in its entirety.

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1. **[Featured Article]** Report on Participation at the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) Asia Pacific Conference

About the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP)

The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) was established in 1960. It is an organization with official ties to the World Health Organization (WHO), and consists of parties involved in suicide countermeasures activities from 79 countries throughout the world. The IASP holds an International Conference and an Asia Pacific Conference every other year in order to provide opportunities to share research results and case studies for promoting evidence-based suicide countermeasures, and opportunities for relationship-building across borders.

The “11th IASP Asia Pacific Conference” began on June 3, 2024, and was held for four days in Bangkok, Thailand’s capital. There were a total of 295 participants from 37 countries (as announced by the conference secretariat) including four members of JSCP. Participants included researchers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and educators from universities and specialty organizations, administrative staff, people directly involved in suicide countermeasures including telephone counselors, as well as media representatives and people bereaved by suicide.



Venue: The Landmark Bangkok Hotel

A total of 167 presentations were given including research presentations, symposiums, and poster sessions in interdisciplinary settings to share research findings and initiative results related to suicide prevention and support for people bereaved by suicide.

◆ Presentations by Members of JSCP ◆

Yasuyuki Shimizu, Representative Director who received the “The Ringel Service Award” in 2023, appeared in two sessions to share knowledge on national-level suicide countermeasures and gave presentations on the following themes. The purpose of these sessions was to promote international and regional cooperation and to find best practices across countries and regions, including Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Hong Kong.

- Systematic Suicide Countermeasures: Policy, Intervention, and Community in Japan
- The Basic Act on Suicide Countermeasures as a Societal Structural Approach

Shimizu explained the purpose and concept behind the “Basic Act on Suicide Countermeasures,” which is the legal basis for establishing a societal structural approach to comprehensive suicide countermeasures, based on his experience establishing a policy framework for suicide countermeasures in Japan. He also explained the mechanisms and features of the comprehensive suicide countermeasures designed on the basis of this law.

After the session, he addressed various questions raised about governmental initiatives leading to the formation of the “Basic Act on Suicide Countermeasures” as well as on local cooperation initiatives.



Shimizu, Representative Director giving his presentation



With presenters in the same sessions

Yusuke Yagai, an analyst at the Department of Research and Analytics / Department for General Suicide Countermeasures, gave an oral presentation on child suicide.

● Exploring Factors and Countermeasures of Adolescent Suicide: An Analysis of 5-Year Student Suicide Reports in Japan

Four young researchers from Hong Kong, Australia, the UK, and Canada were also part of the session. All of them gave presentations on research findings related to self-harm and suicide countermeasures among children and youth, which were followed by lively Q&A sessions and discussions. (An interview with Yusuke Yagai is posted later in this issue.)

During the lunch and tea breaks between presentations, local Thai cuisine was served. Participants talked about the current status of suicide countermeasures in their countries and exchanged opinions on research to deepen interactions.



Yusuke Yagai, an analyst giving his presentation



With presenters in the same sessions



Ai Aoki, Head of the Office for Suicide Attempt Survivors, exchanging information with participants from other countries during a break (center)



Light meals were provided to promote interaction among participants at the venue.

◆ Diverse Themes ◆

Regarding the impact that news and information on suicide have on people, there is ongoing research around the world on new forms of media like social media in addition to traditional forms like television and newspapers, and presentations were made on the latest initiatives with these. Research related to the impact that the rise of social media has had on self-harm among children and youth, and presentations on suicide prevention and counseling initiatives via web ads in conjunction with global media companies drew much attention.

There were also a number of symposiums and presentations related to unique to the cultural aspects of the Asia Pacific Conference. Themes of lectures and symposiums also included the impact of “face culture” on suicide prevention, which is a cultural value system seen in East and Southeast Asian countries where great importance is placed on face (or honor), as well as a religious perspective on suicide prevention measures.

As a continuation from the previous conference, there were multiple symposiums and lectures on the wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders. It is said that indigenous peoples face numerous traumas and mental health issues as a result of lacking cultural identity due to a history of discrimination and persecution. Suicide is the leading cause of death among aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders ages 15 to 34, and the suicide mortality rate is about twice that of the overall population in Australia. Therefore, community interventions to prevent suicide and support programs for people bereaved by suicide and others affected were announced.

— Interview with JSCP Staff —

Yusuke Yagai, an analyst who made a presentation on his research at the IASP Asia Pacific Conference

“Focusing on the individual lives and reasons behind each suicide rather than just on the numbers”

At the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) Asia Pacific Conference, Yusuke Yagai presented a summary of “Exploring Social Factors and Countermeasures of Adolescent Suicide: An Analysis of 5-Year Student Suicide Reports in Japan” which was conducted in fiscal 2023 by JSCP based on a request by the Children and Families Agency. (Click [here](#) for details on the report). This investigation was conducted due to the serious situation related to child suicide, where a record high number of 514 suicides occurred among elementary, junior high, and high school students in 2022.



[Brief Biography]

Yusuke Yagai

Born in Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan in 1993.

Starting in 2014, he researched body coordination for supporting proficient rhythmic movement at the School of Human Sciences, Waseda University.

Ph.D. (Human Sciences). Since 2021, he has worked for ARISE analytics Inc. to verify the effectiveness of measures by

telecommunications companies. After gaining a wide range of analysis experience, including causal inference and machine learning, he was appointed as a JSCP analyst in December 2023.

We asked Yusuke Yagai to give his thoughts on his presentation at the conference, about his work at JSCP, and on suicide countermeasures.

How do you feel about your presentation at the conference?

Yagai) After I gave my presentation, researchers and others connected with private organizations like in Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea, where there is a dangerous increase in child and youth suicide, came and eagerly expressed their thoughts and gave some feedback. One prominent researcher sent me a large number of papers as he thought these would be helpful.

Interacting with participants from different countries, I felt a strong sense of commitment to freely sharing our knowledge to solve social issues together, and a collective determination to “overcome these challenges.” Receiving those papers and advice, I felt it was a reflection of their hope to see an improvement in the suicide situation in Japan.

While exchanging information on child and youth suicide, I learned that while the number of child suicides is increasing in each country, the reasons are completely different. This made me realize that social and cultural aspects must be considered to establish effective suicide countermeasures.

When I conduct analysis on a computer, I tend to focus solely on numbers, which can make it difficult to see the individual struggles, sufferings, and the people bereaved by suicide. But this experience reminded me of the importance of carefully analyzing “what troubles the deceased faced and how they came to take their life.”

■ Click [here](#) to read the whole interview

2. [Presentation Report] Yasuyuki Shimizu, Representative Director takes the stage at the 120th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology

On Friday, June 21, 2024, Representative Director Shimizu took the stage for “Presidential Symposium 1, National Policy and Current Status of Suicide Countermeasures in East Asia (Chaired by Yoshinori Cho, Director General, National Institute of Mental Health, National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry)” at the 120th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology chaired by Chiaki Kawanishi, head of the Department of Neuropsychiatry, Sapporo Medical University Graduate School of Medicine.



Representative Director Shimizu, who appeared at the symposium (Provided by the 120th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology)

In his talk entitled, “Building a Policy Framework for Suicide Countermeasures: A 20-Year Review of Achievements and Challenges,” Shimizu explained the characteristics of comprehensive suicide countermeasures efforts in Japan and the progress up to now, and drew on his own experience to share the principles and strategies he values in promoting these efforts. Jong-Woo Paik from Korea and Shih-Cheng Liao from Taiwan gave talks on the current situation and issues related to suicide countermeasures in their countries. Yoshinori Cho and Chiaki Kawanishi then proceeded with the program, and opinions were shared on the current situation and issues related to suicide countermeasures in East Asia.

3. [Children and Youth] Developing gatekeeper training programs for people working at junior high and high schools

JSCP has developed a training program to foster gatekeepers, targeting people working at junior high and high schools, and began on-demand video distribution in collaboration with the National Institute for School Teachers and Staff Development (NITS).

Using case studies, this content helps them understand the key to noticing SOS signs in students who have suicidal thoughts, and show sympathy so they can provide proper support.

In this training program, investigative research is also conducted to scientifically verify its effectiveness, and volunteers (people working at junior and high schools) are being recruited.

Please help make this training program and investigative research become known.

■ Click [here](#) for more details.

4. [International Cooperation] Visit by Million Joseph of The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

On Monday, June 17, 2024, Million Joseph, a Research Fellow at Winston Churchill Memorial Trust UK, visited JSCP.

In the UK, a five-year, cross-sectoral strategy for suicide countermeasures was launched last year. His purpose was to learn about progress made with suicide countermeasures in Japan.

During the first half of the meeting, JSCP explained the progress and current status of suicide countermeasures in Japan, especially since the year 2000, and in the second half, opinions were exchanged on how to prevent suicide among children and youth along with analysis of factors.



(From left) Analyst Yusuke Yagai; Head of the Department of Research and Analytics, Takashi Nishio; Million Joseph; Head of the Office for Suicide Attempt Survivors, Ai Aoki

5. [Reference Information] The Japanese Society of Comprehensive Suicide Countermeasures held the “2024 Policy Research Conference”

On Tuesday, June 25, 2024, the Japanese Society of Comprehensive Suicide Countermeasures hosted the “2024 Policy Research Conference: Learning from Private Organization Activities” online, which was attended by about 240 people, including Society members and the general public. JSCP supported this conference together with Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Ms. Yurika Watanabe, who is working to address issues related to social isolation in young people (Representative Director of the General Incorporated Association, Kusa-no-ne Sasaeai Project, Executive Director of the Japanese Society of Comprehensive Suicide Countermeasures) gave a lecture that day on the theme, “A consideration of suicide countermeasures based on the “Effectiveness” and “Limitations” of networks focused on isolated young people.”

She introduced a support system to create custom teams for each client, and used the phrase “Relationships over Skills” to emphasize that connections among supporters and supporting organizations are needed in addition to expertise for strengthening communities.

■ For more details, see the “[Abstract](#)”

■ Training videos are gradually being uploaded to the YouTube “JSCP_PR Office” channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNWP2O5zTuul-j8GITeKzHQ>

■ JSCP shares articles on suicide issues and countermeasures via Yahoo! News Expert

(Written by Ms. Kaoru Yamadera, Head of Public Relations Office at JSCP)

<https://news.yahoo.co.jp/byline/yamaderakaoru>

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