

# NURSING EDUCATION FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT AND THE JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY (JICA)

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Okinawa Prefectural College of Nursing (College) is fortunate to have close by, a JICA office and the Okinawa International Center (OIC). JICA was established in 1974 and OIC in 1985. JICA is responsible for technical cooperation in Japan's Official Development Assistance programs. The Okinawa International Center is JICA's contact office in Okinawa prefecture and as such is in charge of its technical training programs. Basic to these programs is Japan's commitment to economic development through self-help in developing countries for world peace and stability. The values implied in this commitment are aligned with those of nursing. They are reflected in our teaching.

At the College, international health and nursing is a central feature. However, as an academic institution sponsored and supported by the prefecture, naturally the health of prefectural citizens is our first concern: The health problems and needs of those living in Okinawa is the starting point of our thinking and teaching. Nevertheless, the faculty recognize that intelligent actions for health locally require that, concomitantly, we think nationally and internationally. Health in Okinawa affects and is affected by the health and diseases in Japan, East Asia, and the world. Disease knows no national boundaries. Unhealthy life styles, which are damaging in one country, appeal to citizens of other countries: There is Westernization of diet, lack of exercise, and use of tobacco. The traditional Okinawan life style, which includes a great deal of physical exercise and a diet low in saturated fat and high in vegetables, is among the healthiest in the world. Okinawa still has more citizens over the age of 100 years than any other place on earth. But today's more westernized diet in Okinawa along with sedentary living and cigarette smoking is producing many of the same diseases and health problems common to North America and Europe. These are facts about globalization that students and faculty take as challenges in analysis of health problems, health systems, and nursing for developing countries. Developing countries comprise about 150 of the world's nearly 200 nations and the majority of the world's people.

Teachers in the College are committed to preparing students not only for hospitals in rich nations, but also for leadership in primary health care and community service in developing ones as well. Community analysis, health promotion, and health education are heavily emphasized, as is understanding the relationship of health development to political and economic stability, and national health policy. Nursing leadership for these is addressed sys-

tematically throughout our programs. We convey to students that as interdependent "citizens of the world" their obligation is to the progress of all societies and that nursing leadership entails using scientific knowledge and practical experience to touch people's lives when they are sick and when they are well.

Students learn about JICA and its training courses here and on foreign soil as part of their introduction to international health. All students and faculty are invited to take part in the frequent sessions we hold at the College for JICA trainees from abroad. The regional origins of the doctors and nurses who have trained at the College include Africa, the Americas, South-East Asia, and the Western Pacific. Through JICA's program for Community Health Administration in Small Pacific island nations, by sharing with trainees while they study at the College, a great deal has been learned about health problems and the challenges to human resources development in Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, and Palau. The nurse and doctor trainees in JICA's courses are public health leaders in their homeland where they typically work under terribly trying circumstances. They are faced with high rates of communicable disease and unsafe living conditions. To counteract these, they have comparatively few resources.

In preparation for the training courses, students work with faculty to search the World Wide Web to locate and retrieve pertinent data to improve understanding of the socio-political and economic contexts in the trainees' countries. The World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the International Monetary Fund, and UNICEF (United Nations Emergency Children's Fund) are among the best web sites for comparative data. We recognize that our reporting of Okinawa's experience and our recommendations to trainees must be highly sensitive to their home environments. It is critically important when recommending policies and programs in Cambodia, for example, that we remember that Japan as the world's second richest economy has about \$1700 (international dollars) per person to spend for health and Cambodia has only \$73. Recommendations to be useful reflect knowledge of and an appreciation of this difference.

While preparing to welcome international trainees, students learn that Japan has the world's longest healthy life expectancy of about 75 years: This is as compared to Sierra Leone with only 26 years. They learn that people in the healthiest regions of the world lose some 9% of their lives to disability compared to 14% in the worst-off countries. Students are often surprised to learn that in the United States some Native Americans and rural African Americans have poor health, comparable to that of people living in developing countries. Facts such as these help us think deeply about country-appropriate and sustainable approaches to health development

Students and faculty also improve their knowledge of such diseases as cholera, dengue fever, and malaria, seen rarely in Japan. They broaden their understanding of infant and child health, of where rates of fully immunized children are high and where they are low, the rea-

sons for these rates, and the actions for disease prevention required by nurses in Okinawa. Throughout, there is mutual learning and sharing.

Japan through its foreign relations and cooperative outreach is helping to build a new world order. National leaders recognize the importance of cooperation and international relations. They exert widespread effort to build constructive and cooperative relationships in a wide range of technical areas including health care for international peace and security.

JICA is an integral element in worldwide initiatives. With OIC, it is a world-class training center for human resource development. Nurse educators and students in Okinawa benefit greatly through their association with JICA-OIC. Our understanding of Japan's foreign policy and the part health professionals with an expanded world-view play for health development is enlarged. Learning together, comparing experiences, engaging in dialogue with people throughout the world about health care for the most vulnerable, and promoting international exchange that rises above geographical distance, helps everyone see more clearly viable paths for progress toward health-for-all.