

Japan and the World in the Era of COVID-19:

Considering whether the new paradigm is a crisis or an opportunity



In collaboration with the
APRU Population Aging Program Hub

COVID-19 has had significant impact on peoples, countries, and the world, and it is thought that it will bring about earth-shattering changes in the future. Examining Japan's response to the first wave of COVID-19, it was found that there were vulnerabilities in its informational infrastructure as well as delays in innovations and their social implementation. These all need to be urgently strengthened before the second wave strikes.

In this seminar, the broad range of effects the virus has had will be analyzed from multiple perspectives. In addition to explaining current measures, proposals will be made on actions that need to be urgently undertaken in preparation for a second wave as well as on what policies should be introduced in the next six months to create a new society with COVID-19. We will hear expert views as well as both Japanese and international political perspectives from those who have been actively involved in our fight against COVID-19.

- There will be four live (Japanese language) seminars at 17:00–18:30 (JST)
 - Seminar 1: Health and Science & Technology, on June 17
 - Seminar 2: Economy and Work, on July 1
 - Seminar 3: Society and Law, on July 15
 - Seminar 4: Summing Up, on July 29
- Live seminars will be conducted entirely in Japanese; however, the speakers listed on the following pages will also make video recordings of their presentations in English.
- The English videos will become available after the live seminars in Japanese. Once available, a notification e-mail will be sent to registrants.
- A live wrap-up discussion in English is scheduled at 18:30–19:00 on July 29 (Wed.), immediately after Seminar 4. The panelists will answer pre-selected questions from the audience.

Date & Time

LIVE SEMINAR in English: Wrap-up discussion

July 29 (Wed.), 2020 18:30–19:00 (JST) after Seminar 4

Registration

Registration can be made via this link:

https://keio-univ.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Mks9cByPST-qJmB7Qs5x8w



The presentations below are available as English video recordings on KGRI website.

1. COVID-19 countermeasures in the Asian region: Lessons learned and future outlook



Takeshi Kasai

Regional Director of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office

Dr Takeshi Kasai began his term as WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific on 1 February 2019, following his nomination by the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific and his appointment by the WHO Executive Board.

The public health career of Dr Kasai began nearly 30 years ago when he was assigned to northeast coast of Japan, providing health-care services for the elderly. In the mid-1990s, Dr Kasai attended the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, where he studied in the Department of Global Health and Development and received a master's degree in public health.

Dr Kasai has worked for WHO for more than 15 years, and at the time of his nomination was Director of Programme Management at the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific in Manila, Philippines. He also served as a Technical Officer and later as the Director of the Division of Health Security at the Regional Office and the WHO Representative in Viet Nam from 2012 to 2014.

Abstract:

While we are relieved that, none of the countries in our Region, except Hubei Province in China in the earlier months of the outbreak, have experienced large-scale community transmission for now, we are conscious that the pandemic is far from over.

The key to controlling COVID-19 in the Region has been proactively finding and isolating the cases of COVID-19, tracing and quarantining contacts, multisource surveillance; and community engagement. In addition, stringent public health distancing measures, including movement controls, were introduced comparatively early in the outbreak. These measures have averted what would have been devastating consequences of an uncontrolled COVID-19 epidemic.

But we must also recognize that the socioeconomic costs of some of these control measures have been enormous. Furthermore, this virus has attacked the shortcomings of societies and revealed the various challenges which we need to confront.

Countries are facing a profound and complex challenge: how to control COVID-19 in our communities, while at the same time, bringing back our economies and societies. In moving forward, we should create a new normal in which we don't have to choose between health and livelihood. Rather, we should bring up both. The big decisions on how to do this need to be made together, bringing the health sector, economic sector and community at one table. In taking those actions IT and innovation will take an important role.

We have spent a lot of time preparing for the next pandemic in this Region. That future is now here. So many people have suffered from COVID-19. I believe it is not just our responsibility to respond to COVID-19. Rather, we have an obligation to make our societies and health systems stronger and better prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow.

2. Factor X: Why did Japan dodge the bullet of a medical crisis?



Jin Nakahara

Professor, School of Medicine, Keio University/Deputy Director, KGRI

Jin Nakahara is based in Tokyo, Japan as a Professor of Internal Medicine at the Keio University School of Medicine. He also serves as a Deputy-Director of KGRI. Prof. Nakahara received his M.D. from the Keio University School of Medicine in 2003, and his Ph.D. from the Keio University Graduate School of Medicine in 2007. He holds active memberships with many professional societies in Japan and abroad, and he is a Director of the Japanese Society of Neuroimmunology and the Japan Multiple Sclerosis Network. He also serves as a committee member of the Central Organizing Committee of PACTRIMS, a Delegate of the Japanese Society of Neurology, and a Councilor of the Japanese Society of Internal Medicine.

Abstract:

On January 15, 2020, the first COVID-19 patient was confirmed in Japan. Then in the following February, the fateful Diamond Princess cruise ship returned to Japan, with 712 confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infected cases. With a growing number of COVID-19 patients in Japan and across Asia, by early March many countries including the United States started to consider banning Japanese tourists. Unexpectedly, however, the outbreak expanded into the Europe and the American continent, resulting in a sharp and explosive rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, leaving Japan far behind. By late March, many experts warned that Tokyo will face a “medical crisis” within a couple of weeks, just as New York is suffering now. On April 7, a state of emergency was declared in Japan, with a much less stringent “voluntary lockdown” compared to other nations. Nevertheless, the number of casualties per capita in Japan remains around 1–2% of the United States or European nations. If not a miracle, what was the “factor X” which enabled Japan to dodge the bullet of a medical crisis?

3. Medtech Ecosystem—learn what one can learn from COVID-19



Kenjiro Takemura

Professor, Faculty of Science and Technology, Keio University

Kenjiro Takemura received his Ph.D. in integrated design engineering from Keio University in 2002. He stayed on at the Department of Mechanical Engineering as a Research Associate, before moving to the Precision and Intelligence Laboratory at the Tokyo Institute of Technology as an Assistant Professor from 2003 to 2008. He joined the Department of Mechanical Engineering of the Faculty of Science and Technology at Keio University in 2008 where he is currently a Professor. During this time he was a visiting scholar twice; at Monash University and UC San Diego in 2006 and 2019, respectively. His research interests are in ultrasonic transducers, functional fluids, automated cell culture systems, haptic interfaces, and soft robots.

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the entire globe. Measures against the novel coronavirus, for which there is currently no vaccine or silver bullet, are extremely primitive as symbolized by the phrases “Stay at Home” and “Social Distancing.” Consequently, our lives have changed drastically. Efforts to withstand the inconvenience and regain our original lifestyles are important, but major reform of the social structure to make the coming era of post/with COVID-19 more robust will be essential to prepare for the next crisis. In order to make the medical system, which is one of the most important infrastructures supporting life in our society, more robust and efficient, I am proposing a new *medtech ecosystem* which includes voices from the medical front and real world based on what we have learned from emergent projects against COVID-19.

Seminar 3: Society and Law (Presented live in Japanese on July 15)

The presentation below is available as English video recording on KGRI website.

1. The geopolitical shift in the Corona era



Toshihiro Nakayama

Professor, Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University/Deputy Director, KGRI

Professor Nakayama received M.A. and Ph.D. from Aoyama Gakuin University. He has made stops as a Special Correspondent for the Washington Post at the Far Eastern Bureau, Special Assistant at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations in New York, Senior Research Fellow at The Japan Institute of International Affairs, CNAPS Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Sir Howard Kippenberger Chair Visiting Professor at the Center for Strategic Studies, Victoria University in Wellington, and a Japan Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center. He has been in his current position at the Faculty of Policy Management since April 2014. He specializes in American politics and foreign policy, international relations, and US-Japan bilateral relations. His major publications include the books *American Ideology* and *American Intervention* (both in Japanese). In 2014, he received the Nakasone Yasuhiro Award (Incentive Award).

Abstract:

The COVID-19 crisis is bringing about various changes at the personal, societal, national, and international levels. It has accelerated changes that were already taking place and these changes at all levels are affecting one another, which is leading to a situation of uncertainty. At the international level, the crisis has made us aware of the need for global cooperation, though in reality, we are seeing an acceleration of an opposing dynamic. Nationalist tendencies prevalent before the crisis have also been intensifying, hindering much-needed international cooperation. Furthermore, at a time of increasingly explicit competition between “authoritarian” and open systems, the seeming lack of a flag-bearer among open societies on the international stage has fueled fears for the future of democracy. China, who is now clearly a major geopolitical player, is attempting to fill that vacuum. This begs the question: what should Japan’s role be in this new normal of a world with COVID-19 and beyond?

Seminar 4: Summing Up (Presented live in Japanese on July 29)

The presentations below are available as English video recordings on KGRI website.

1. Infectious disease emergency preparedness and response: Japan's challenges seen from COVID-19



Keizo Takemi

Member, House of Councillors, National Diet of Japan

Keizo Takemi is a member of the House of Councillors, the National Diet of Japan, where he belongs to the Liberal Democratic Party, the ruling party, and serves as Chair of the Special Committee on Global Health Strategy. He was a research fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health from November 2007 to June 2009. He is also a visiting professor at a number of universities around the country including Nagasaki University.

Professor Takemi served in the first Abe administration's cabinet as Senior Vice Minister for Health, Labour and Welfare. He led the initiative to establish the UN Trust Fund for Human Security when he was State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1999 and was subsequently named by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to serve as a member of the High Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence in Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Environment. He has been a senior fellow with the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) since 2007, where he is the chair of the Executive Committee of the Global Health and Human Security Program. In recognition of his contributions to the field over the past decade, he was appointed WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in July 2019.

Abstract:

It has become increasingly apparent that among the responses to the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis that there are issues for which, ideally, Japan would have already had measures in place. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case. Examples that have been especially scrutinized domestically include the functionality of the Cabinet Secretariat's command structure; the establishment of clinical, pathological analyses, testing, epidemiological surveys, and international cooperation mechanisms; the procurement of beds and securing of hospitals specializing in infectious diseases during emergencies; the need to clarify the division of roles between national and local governments; emergency legislation for infectious diseases; and the construction of medical information systems that are developed on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, by broadening the scope to include international issues, it has become clear that a global health governance system built upon the antiquated idea of "developing" and "developed" nations is limiting from the viewpoint of the development, production, and distribution of vaccines. We need to consider what is required to prepare for emergencies to ensure that the lessons of COVID-19 are not forgotten as merely temporary measures for a one-off occurrence.

2. Steps towards COVID-19 suppression



Hideyuki Okano

Professor, School of Medicine, Keio University/Senior Researcher, KGRI

Hideyuki Okano received his M.D. in Physiology from Keio University in 1983. He went on to do a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology, also at Keio University, researching myelin-related genes and myelin deficient mutants and earning his diploma in 1988, after which he took a postdoctoral position at Dr. Craig Montell's Laboratory at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He was appointed full professorships at the Tsukuba University School of Medicine in 1994 and the Osaka University School of Medicine in 1997, before returning to the Keio University School of Medicine in 2001 as a professor of Physiology. In 2007, he became Dean of the Graduate School of Medicine, and in 2015, the Dean of the School of Medicine. Throughout his career he has been conducting basic research in the field of regenerative medicine including neural stem cells and iPS cells, spinal cord injury, developmental genetics, and RNA binding proteins. He has been awarded numerous awards and honors including a Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon in 2009 and the first prize in the 51st Erwin von Bälz Award in 2014.

Abstract:

From a historical perspective, pandemics, from the plague in the 14th century, cholera in the 19th century, and the Spanish flu in the early 20th Century, have all been caused by different pathogens. Now, almost 100 years after the Spanish flu, which to date remains the worst infectious disease in human history, we are facing the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has been caused by SARS-CoV-2 infections, is going to profoundly change the health, medicine, economy, and daily lives of people around the world, and will be a defining event of the 21st century.

Clearly, the suppression of COVID-19 is an urgent task for all humankind, but even if this is achieved, experts have pointed out that new pandemics may be triggered more frequently in the future due to outbreaks of new zoonosis caused by ecological, behavioral, or socioeconomic changes, but also the spread of various pathogens that have previously been isolated in the permafrost in Siberia, which is now thawing due to global warming. Based on sound scientific evidence and the latest predictive technologies, there is a need to establish diagnostic, therapeutic, and prophylactic methods, including vaccines, for COVID-19. (Abstract based on Okano and Seino, *Inflammation and Regeneration* volume 40, 2020).

In the present talk, I will summarize recent investigations on diagnostic, therapeutic, and prophylactic methods for COVID-19, including our collaborative projects to develop a new vaccine for COVID-19.

LIVE SEMINAR in English: Wrap-up Discussion

Date and Time: July 29 (Wed.), 2020, 18:30-19:00 (JST) after Seminar 4

Panelists:

Keizo Takemi

Member, House of Councillors, National Diet of Japan

Takeshi Kasai

Regional Director of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office

Hideyuki Okano

Professor, School of Medicine, Keio University/Senior Researcher, KGRI

Sachiko Kazekami

Associate Professor, Faculty of Business and Commerce, Keio University

Moderator:

Ryoji Noritake

CEO and Board Member, Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI)

Mr. Ryoji Noritake is the CEO, Board Member of Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI), a Tokyo-based independent and non-profit health policy think tank established in 2004. He is a graduate of Keio University's Faculty of Policy Management, holds a MSc in Medical Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.