

MEETING REPORT

Prevention of Life-style Related Diseases in Sri Lanka

August 6th, 2008, Colombo Hilton Hotel

Introduction

In addition to sponsoring yearly international cancer research conferences in Sapporo, Japan, the Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation has long been involved in projects in Sri Lanka to improve the health of its people. Together with staff of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency office in Colombo, Dr Hiroshi Kobayashi of the Foundation has been sponsoring a number of activities focusing on schools in the south of the country. In August of this year, to commemorate 10 years of activity, a Symposium was organized and sponsored by the Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation, in collaboration with JICA Sri Lanka and Sapporo, to bring together a number of scientists working in Japan with counterparts in Sri Lanka in the Colombo Hilton Hotel to discuss various aspects of life-style related diseases in Asia and how they may be prevented. Other sponsors were the National Cancer Control Program, Colombo, the Rotary Club of Colombo, and the Foundation for Health Promotion, Colombo.

Asian Pacific J Cancer Prev, 9, 367-370

Program

9.00-9.30

Welcome Address: Dr. **Hiroshi Kobayashi**
(Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation, Sapporo)

Opening Address: Ms **Noriko Suzuki**
(Head, JICA, Sri Lanka)

Introductory Comments: Dr. **Diyanath Samarasinghe**
(Faculty of Medicine, Colombo)



Photograph 1. Drs Dula de Silva, Yasantha Ariyaratne and Malcolm Moore



Photograph 2. Drs Diyanath Samarasinghe, Suminori Kono, Tetsuji Miura and Tetsuya Mizoue

9.30-10.30 Chair: Dr. **Dula de Silva**
(Deputy Director General, Health Science)
Chronic Disease Control in Asian Countries
Dr. **Malcolm Moore**
(UICC ARO, Tokyo)

Changing Patterns of Non-communicable
Diseases in Sri Lanka
Dr. **Yasantha Ariyaratne**
(National Cancer Control Program,
Colombo)

10.30-11.00 Tea break

11.00-1.00 Chair: Dr. **Diyanath Samarasinghe** (Faculty of Medicine, Colombo)

Prevention of Digestive Tract Cancers

Dr. **Suminori Kono** (Kyushu University, Fukuoka)

Prevention of Hypertension and Cardiovascular Diseases

Dr. **Tetsuji Miura** (Sapporo Medical University, Sapporo)

Prevention of Diabetes and some other Related Diseases

Dr. **Tetsuya Mizoue** (International Medical Center of Japan, Tokyo)

General Discussion



Photograph 3. Dr Hiroshi Kobayashi



Photograph 3. JICA Staff and the Sri Lankan Audience

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-3.50 Chair: Dr. **Yasantha Ariyaratne** (National Cancer Control Program, Colombo)

Prevention of life style related Diseases through the Education to School Children

Dr. **Hiroshi Kobayashi** (Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation, Sapporo)

Early Indicators from School Based Interventions in Sri Lanka

Dr. **Diyanath Samarasinghe** (Faculty of Medicine, Colombo)

Mr. **Jinendra Senanayake** (Foundation for Health Promotion, Colombo)

Comments : Ms. **Kotohi Inoue** (JICA - Sri Lanka)

General Discussion

Closing Remarks : Dr. **Yasantha Ariyaratne** (National Cancer Control Program, Colombo)

Introduction

The idea of the Symposium was to focus on the three main chronic or non-communicable diseases, cancer, diabetes and circulatory problems, dealing with the risk factors and how they might best be prevented. The four specialists from Japan gave talks on the basis of their own research with practical examples of preventive measures. Dr Diyanath Samarasinghe of the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo University, stressed the psychosocial context of disease development and its control, while Jinendra Senanayake concentrated attention on field work being conducted by the Foundation for Health Promotion in rural areas of Sri Lanka. A particular emphasis was on the success of tobacco control efforts targeting adults through their children.



Photograph 5. Community-based Chronic Disease Prevention in the School Environment



Photograph 6. Lunch-time in a School Cafeteria

Dr Dr Kobayashi himself presented a picture of the activities of the Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation over the last ten year period, describing his many visits to schools in the South of Sri Lanka and projects together with the Foundation for Health Promotion (see Kobayashi, 2006, for the underlying philosophy). For example, there is a focus on Parent Days, at which students present their own health-related activities financed by small grants from the Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation. The emphasis is on positive feedback with the children, using them to also get across health messages, like those against smoking, to their parents. This appears to have

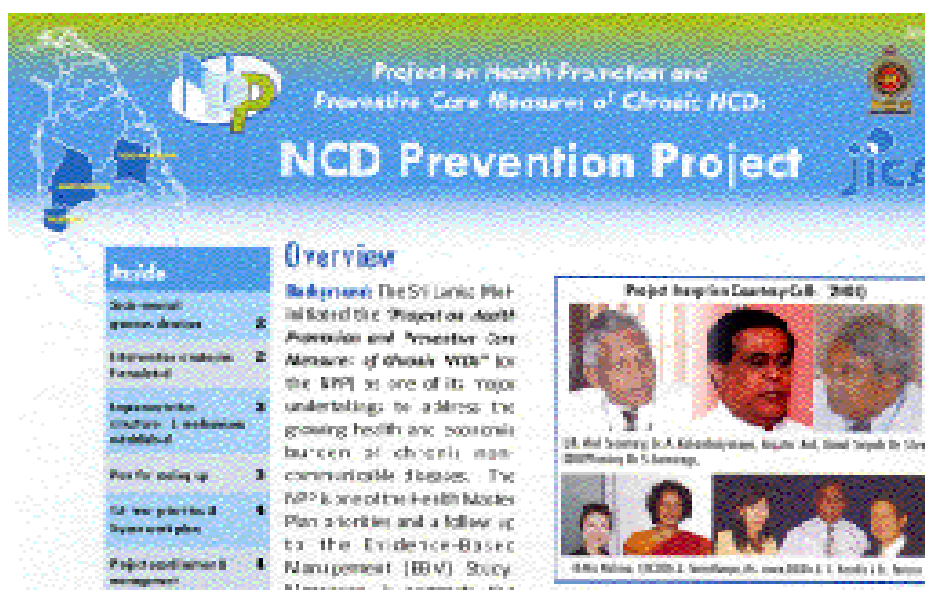
already proved very effective. As part of the community improvement in schools there is a program to provide new steelplate surface blackboards. The pilot project up till the present has involved four schools in Walasmulla and Tangalle zones, but it is hoped that expansion to other areas near Colombo will be possible in the future.

As part of the visit to Sri Lanka, Dr Tetsuya Mizoue of the International Medical Center of Japan and Dr Malcolm Moore of the UICC Asian Regional Office for Cancer Control visited two of the major universities, the University of Kelaniya and the University of Colombo for further discussions with Medical Faculty members of staff. On the table were suggestions to set up collaborative research projects and hopefully stage a meeting within 2009 in Colombo to bring together all scientists interested in taking part in such cooperation. The staging of the meeting by the Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation thus played an important seed role in setting up possible research collaboration. This is in line with the long-term collaboration set up between the Health Sciences University of Hokkaido in Sapporo and oral cancer researchers in Sri Lanka, which has resulted in a number of research papers in the literature (Chiba, 2001; Chiba et al., 1998; Topcu et al., 2002; Haniffa et al., 2007; Takeshima et al., 2008). In Sri Lanka, oral cavity cancer caused by the habit of betel chewing tobacco accounts for a high percentage of deaths. Oral cavity cancer patients have difficulty taking meals; it is quite an unfortunate cancer in terms of appearance as well. Thus, it was decided to conduct a prevention campaign against oral cavity cancer there. As part of this campaign, Professor Itsuo Chiba of the Health Science University of Hokkaido created campaign posters with the text in both Sinhali and Tamil saying, "Chewing tobacco causes oral cavity cancer; Let's stop it", and widely distributed them to those concerned (Text-Figure 1). Through the contacts of Dr Kobayashi with the Rotary Club of Colombo we also were able to visit the National Cancer Center of Sri Lanka for discussions during our stay in the country.



Text-Figure 1. Poster Message “If you don’t stop this habit you will end up in a coffin”

The International Medical Center of Japan and the University of Kelaniya already have a history of collaboration for the Ragama Health Study to determine the prevalence of the metabolic syndrome in a defined population. Together with other projects this was conducted within the scope of the “Project on Health Promotion and Preventive Care Measures for Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases” now being performed under the ownership of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health with support by JICA. The purpose of this 5-year project, beginning in May 2008, is to develop effective and efficient implementation strategies for the prevention and control of NCDs (see Text-figure 2).



Text-Figure 2. Project on Health Promotion and Preventive Care Measures for Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases



Photograph 1. Participants at the Prevention of Life-style Related Diseases in Sri Lanka

The projects sponsored by the Sapporo Cancer Seminar Foundation under the direction of Dr Hiroshi Kobayashi, both at the school level and by holding mini-symposia, are an important adjunct to this larger scale endeavour, both providing stimuli to help the Sri Lankan government and people in their efforts for cancer and other chronic disease control. I feel proud to have had the opportunity to participate.

Malcolm A Moore

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References

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