

The Road to the Future

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In 1995 my grandfather had a car accident and was taken to an emergency hospital. My grandfather was hit on the head and had a cerebral hemorrhage so he needed to be treated immediately and specially. However, there wasn't a cerebral surgeon. The doctor who majored in a different field couldn't find out what was wrong and just let him alone without doing anything. As a result, the left side of his body was paralyzed and he couldn't even move his body or swallow the things he ate. My father took him to another hospital immediately, and he had a narrow escape from death, but his body was paralyzed and did not recover by the time he passed away. My grandfather's life had ended in despair just because he was taken to an emergency hospital, a place that must save people's lives.

Today, I am here to talk about the problems of emergency hospitals that are left untouched so that we can change it into a way it should be by raising our awareness towards the problem.

An emergency hospital must be a place to cope with any kind of illness correctly at anytime. However, the reality is widely different from the way it should be. My grandfather's case is not an exception and there exists inestimable medical accidents that should not happen if the emergency hospitals were well prepared. Moreover, many patients are rejected because the emergency hospitals weren't ready for an outpatient. And they are sent around from one hospital to another. In 1993, such number was up to 38,000 and some of the patients lost their precious lives during the drive to the hospital, believing that it is a road that will lead them to a better future.

Then, although this is clear fact, why is the government approving such emergency hospitals that are so horrible? According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare, each prefecture is checking whether the emergency hospitals are working well or not. However, the check relies on some simple documentation and a short boarding visit once every 3 years. Actually most of the emergency hospitals pass the examination with ease and the situation will not become better at all.

This is because in the 1960s', traffic accidents became one social topic and to cope with the increasing number of patients, a large number of

emergency hospitals to deal with surgery was in need. So the government made it easier to increase the number of emergency hospitals by making the regulation loose. However, there is no reason to keep this regulation the way it is.

An emergency hospital must be a place to save the patients lives. So the equipments must be prepared and ready at any time. Next, there must be doctors of all the departments so that the hospital can deal with any kind of illness at any time. And the government must guarantee all these requirements for our precious lives.

According to Dr. Tetsu Okumura in Kawasaki Medical University, the United States has succeeded to improve the quality by introducing a strict system. It has been observing the emergency hospitals objectively since the 1970s'. At the present time, most of the emergency hospitals in the United States are assessed periodically. If that assessment is low, they are severely penalized until it improves the points that are lacking. Moreover, the information is open to the public via the Internet.

Surely in Japan, such kind of system that is strict and effective is in need. As long as the system is for us, we should think of what we can do. In order to do so, we should consider what was missing among us and blame ourselves. Although we are the ones who depend on emergency hospitals, aren't we so indifferent towards the problem? Do you know which emergency hospital you are going to be taken in case of a sudden illness? Do you know the fact, what is happening in the emergency hospitals? First, we must know these facts and then, think of how we can change the present situation.

Then, how can we actualize our voices? Fortunately, the Ministry of Health and Welfare is accepting our voices by e-mails or letters. We must make use of those limited measures to make this an important social issue. You may wonder, whether such small efforts will bring changes. Yes, it may be small things. But the question is whether we can have awareness and make use of this opportunity or not. We must believe in ourselves and do our best for our precious lives before we become the next victims. We must act today, in order to live tomorrow. What I wish for all of you is not a regret of yesterday, but a hope for tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen, surely, there are other medical problems that we should solve. But among those, I chose this topic today for my final speech, because this tragedy may suddenly befall any of you.

Because we are the ones who depend on emergency hospitals, and because we are the ones who were leaving our duty to another, I believe that we are the ones and we are the only ones to open our eyes and raise our voices. I believe that the day will come, a day when we can sleep peacefully and wait for tomorrow. I believe that there will be a road that will lead us to the future.