

演題番号:11

テーマ 4:移民の健康(インバウンドの健康を含む)

Field Report: Covid-19 pandemic and Nikkei community in Parana, Brazil

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It was in 1915 that the first Japanese immigrant arrived in the state of Parana, Brazil. Later on an immigration partnership agreement between Parana state and Hyogo prefecture, Japan was established. Now, 2 to 3 million Nikkei people live across Brazil and around 20% of them live in the state of Parana. The purpose of this field report is to 1) describe the Covid-19-related situations in Brazil, focusing on the Nikkei community in Parana, 2) to share the field experience of a Nikkei doctor who serves at Hospital da Policia Militar in Curitiba, the capital of Parana, and 3) to discuss lessons learned for fighting against global emerging diseases in ethnically diverse nations and societies.

The first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in Brazil in February 2020, and 37.5 million cases and 702,421 deaths occurred to date. It is reported that at least 810 physicians also lost their lives in the pandemic. Brazil faced many problems during the pandemic, starting from the difficulty in understanding the importance of vaccination, because of political misinformation spread by former Brazil president Jair Bolsonaro. Nevertheless, the country could respond reasonably well to the health, economic, and social chaos, mainly thanks to the history of mass population vaccination (polio, tetanus, measles, and other infectious diseases that are in the vaccination calendar). For example, in the state of Parana, out of the 11,080,000 population, 10,334,818 received the first dose, and 9,544,053 received the second dose. The best vaccine coverage was achieved. Available vaccines varied from CoronaVac (Sinovac), Pfizer, and AstraZeneca, or mixed.

There was a significant impact on the Nikkei's economic status in Brazil, as many members of the Nikkei community engaged in farming, and a large amount of their agricultural production was spoiled during the pandemic. The health impact on the Nikkei community was not different from other ethnicities in Brazil. The Nikkei community was equally affected, mainly because of the following reasons: a) good integration of the Nikkei community in Brazilian society – most Nikkei are well-employed or have their own business or are independent professionals, and b) because of the social and economic stability of the Nikkei in Brazil.

On the contrary, a different reality may have occurred in the Nikkei population in Japan, which may have been more impacted by the pandemic due to: a) precarious job status (almost all have temporary jobs), b) difficulty in communication and understanding the Japanese characters (kanji), and c) restrictions imposed by the Japanese government on international travel.

Either in Brazil or in Japan, solidarity is crucial, the community needs to stay connected and believe in the scientific evidence (i.e., vaccination coverage).