

Occupational Therapy Practice for Victims of Disaster in Non-affected Community and Supporting to Disaster Areas

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Abstract : Great East Japan Earthquake that hit Japan in March 2011, the author has been actively meeting the needs during times of disaster in Nagano City, a region that was not directly affected by the earthquake disaster. The rehabilitation network formed by occupational therapists and physiotherapists in 2011 continues to be active in the form of temporary housing for nuclear accident evacuees in Nihonmatsu City, Fukushima. Through occupation-based programs being conducted as part of these activities, victims have demonstrated a change; they are beginning to incorporate the meaningful occupation they performed before the disaster back into their lives.

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1. Introduction

Since 2009, the author has taught a monthly Lifelong Learning course at the Higano Senior Citizen Welfare Center entitled "Keeping Healthy Through Occupation!" that is designed to get senior citizens to think about a healthy lifestyle through Occupation. Since immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake that hit Japan in March 2011, the author has been actively meeting the needs during the time of disaster in Nagano City, a region that was not directly affected by the earthquake disaster. At first, the mental health issues of local residents were addressed, then disaster area support projects and mutual exchange between those providing support and disaster victims were conducted, and activities by volunteer groups have just begun.

On the other hand, The Rehabilitation

Network formed by occupational therapists and physiotherapists in 2011 continues to be active at temporary housing for nuclear accident evacuees in Nihonmatsu City, Fukushima.

Cooperating with The Rehabilitation Network, through occupation-based programs conducted as part of these activities, victims have demonstrated a change; they are beginning to incorporate the meaningful occupation they performed before the disaster back into their lives.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to organize the temporary transitions of the area that was not directly affected by the earthquake disaster and disaster area support programs based on occupation, discuss the role of occupational therapists in supporting the area that was not

directly affected by the earthquake disaster and the disaster area, and consider future tasks.

3. Practice Contents

3-1. Mental health

- Purpose: Due to the information reported by the mass media and others immediately after the disaster, many of those in the general population who were not victims of the disaster seemed to display uneasiness. One report suggested that such people were at risk of PTSD⁽¹⁾.
- A course on basic knowledge regarding the mental health was held mainly for participants in the Lifelong Learning course held at the Senior Citizens Welfare Center entitled “Keeping Healthy Through Occupation!”

3-2. Integrating “Support” Occupation into Daily Life

3-2-1. Start of the Yo-Yo Project

- Purpose: To convert the time normally spent watching television into the time spent doing occupation for support. This fulfilled the occupatin-related need to aid disaster victims.
- The author planned and implemented the Yo-Yo Project for participants in the “Keeping Healthy Through Occupation !” course and users of the Higano Senior Citizen Welfare Center.
- The project became gradually more widespread among participants in this and other courses, and yo-yo quilts made at home were collected. Some participants created their own independent groups for the purpose of making quilts.

3-2-2. Mental health courses for local residents and the Yo-Yo Project

- Purpose: The purpose is to integrate mental

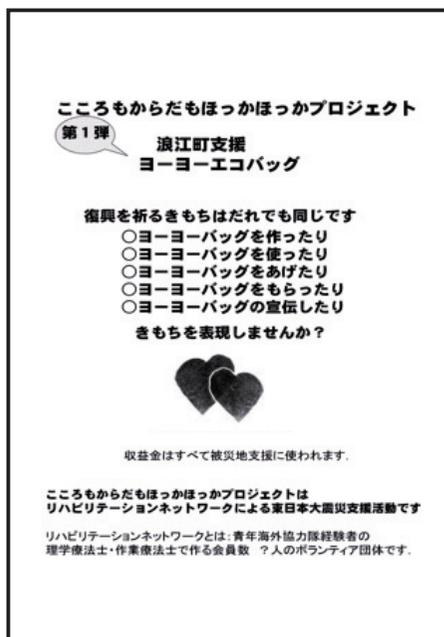
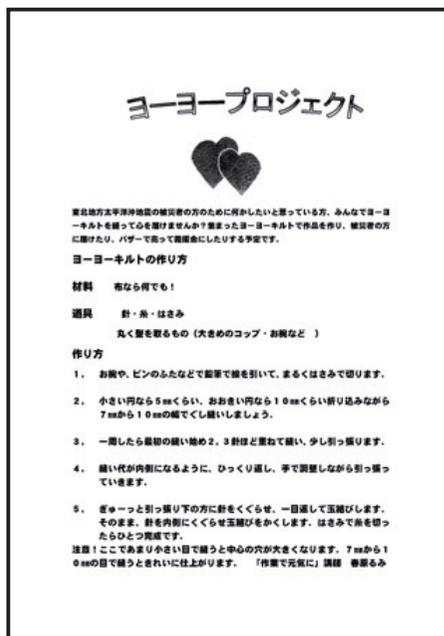


Fig. 1 Leaflet of Yo-Yo Project

health and support activities into the daily lives of not only course participants, but also local residents.

- The author held one-time-only mental health courses and Yo-Yo quilt workshops. The participants ranged in age from children to mothers and senior citizens.

Some participants formed a volunteer group called “Anzu no Kai,” which conducted activities once a month.

3-2-3. Expanding the Yo-Yo Project

Occupational therapist groups, occupational therapy clients, training school students and instructors, and course participants were among the many people from the community who were involved in conducting the project at clinical settings and educational facilities.

3-2-4. Launch of Namie Kizuna supporters

- Purpose: Continuation of support & making friends
- Course participants and participants in projects conducted in local communities who express the desire to join are registered as members of Namie Kizuna Supporters.

3-2-5. Activities at temporary housing facilities in Nihonmatsu City

The author has been cooperating with The Rehabilitation Network that has been conducting support activities since immediately after the disaster.

Three thousand yo-yo quilts made as part of the Yo-Yo Project are actually being used by residents of disaster-stricken areas, and calendars were produced with the quilts.

3-2-6. Start of the Yo-Yo Project in disaster-stricken areas



Fig. 2 Products of Yo-Yo Project made by clients undergoing occupational therapy



Fig.3 Namie kizuna supporters



Fig.4 Temporary housing facilities in Nihonmatsu City,

- Purpose: The purpose was to help disaster victims resume the daily occupation that they had previously been engaged in. This would lead to contributions to the community in the form of enjoyment, attempting new occupation, forming relationships with other people, and selling the products of their labour.
- A project was started to help residents of disaster-stricken areas to warm their bodies and hearts by making yo-yo quilts and creating bagging and then selling these products at bazaars.

3-2-7. Himawari Project launched from disaster-stricken areas

Disaster victims teach other disaster victims and volunteers how to make himawari (sunflowers) using the same materials as the Yo-Yo Project. This is then taught to people providing support, enabling mutual exchange.

3-3. The Rehabilitation Network

3-3-1.

Nuclear accident evacuee support began in two temporary housing facilities in Nihonmatsu City, beginning in September 2011. Support was provided twice a month, and has continued to the present date. Activity contents included massages, discussion focused on the work that evacuees want to do, preparation for occupation and contextualized handicrafts and cooking.

3-3-2.

Initially, activities were conducted with the purpose of evacuees' gathering and sharing their experiences of the disaster as well as providing them some occupation as they had 'nothing to do' due to the environmental changes caused by the disaster.

3-3-3.

Gradually, the contents of the activities



Fig.5 Having a sense of mastery and sense of achievement pleasure



Fig.6 Making Yo-Yo Bag together



Fig.6 Yo-Yo-Bags

changed to the kind of occupation that was reflective of the local culture or the evacuees' personal occupation histories. The evacuees began producing and selling sashiko, a handicraft from their region, which then led to the job they called tsurushibina. They also began cultivating an indigenous crop called junen and used it to begin cooking local dishes with other evacuees.

4. Discussion

4-1.

The author promoted mental health care during the time of disaster by providing mental and physical health information to residents of communities that were not affected by the disaster. The author also proposed and implemented a project designed to help people decide what kind of occupation to select and integrate it into their daily lives based on their individual circumstances and help people integrate support as a kind of occupation in their daily lives. A wide variety of local residents participated, they were able to integrate occupation designed to provide support for disaster-stricken areas into their individual daily lives, and thus were able to fulfill their occupation-related needs. This led to relationships forming between people providing support and disaster victims.



Fig.8 Himawari(Sunflower) Quilt



Fig.9 Himawari Quilt Workshop in Nagano

Table 1 Therapists joined



4-2.

The project led to relationships forming between people providing support and disaster victims, and mutual exchange developed through occupation. These relationships were characteristic of occupational therapy and included relationships between people providing support through occupation and relationships between people providing support and disaster victims through occupation. Occupation as considered from a variety of viewpoints needs to be used to conduct programs and create networks that promote understanding of the state of disaster-stricken areas and interaction between supporters and people affected by disasters so as to continue to provide disaster support in the long-term.

4-3.

Occupational therapists ascertain the occupation-related needs of disaster victims according to the actual living conditions, changes in circumstances, and physical and mental state of the disaster victims in disaster-stricken areas. Proposing and carrying out occupation designed to meet these needs are essential to the maintenance of the health and lifestyles of disaster victims.

4-4.

Occupational therapy that focuses on occupation is instrumental in people's ability to resume healthy lifestyles in situations in which their occupation unavoidably underwent changes as a result of a disaster. It is necessary for people to have easy access to occupational therapy through civic activities.

4-5.

Occupation-based programs in disaster areas are successful in incorporating meaningful

occupation into the lives of evacuees, which brings positive changes in their lives.

Reference

1. Jennifer Ahern, MPH: Television Images and Probable Posttraumatic Stress Disorder After September 11, The journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, Volume 192, Number 3, 217-226, 2004.