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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## A Survey on International Nursing Education of National Universities in Japan

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** In this study, we clarified the current status of international nursing education at the national university and investigated issues related to education in the future.

**Method:** Self-administered questionnaires were distributed by mail to the educators responsible for international nursing education (one per university) at 42 nursing departments of national universities. The survey period was from July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016.

**Results:** Responses were received from all 20 universities with full-time educators. For the 22 universities without full-time educators, information was collected by phone, email, and from the homepage of their specific university. As a result, information was obtained for all 42 universities. Of these, 85.7% implemented international nursing education and 52.4% have established it as a compulsory subject. In all, there were 61.9% universities with full-time nurses acting as academic advisors. Most of educators considered that “understanding of different cultures,” “world health policies,” and “content relating to international cooperation” were essential contents for education in the future.

**Discussion:** As 52.4% of the universities that were surveyed treated international nursing as a compulsory subject, it is considered that whether or not one receives lectures on international nursing education is largely effected by the system of the university and the choice of the student. Regarding issues in the future, the construction of a curriculum aiming for the development of human resources with the capacity for practical application and rich in internationality is necessary.

<Key-words>

international health, education, national university, nursing, Japan

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## I. Background

Following the globalization of nursing, the importance of thorough international nursing education has attracted a lot of attention. The report from the Improvement of Basic Nursing Education Review (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009), included the following guideline: "Cooperation with foreign countries as nurses should be considered from a broad perspective in international society." Moreover, the report from the Nursing Staff University Training Review (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2011), clearly states that undergraduate programs for nursing staff training should "aim to train personnel rich in internationality with practical application ability in order to contribute to health care, medicine and welfare." In response to these governmental policies, universities began working towards providing international nursing education. However, it is currently difficult to allot enough time to international nursing education, because it is necessary to educate students in accordance with Specified Rules of Schools and Vocational Schools for Public Health Nurses, Midwives, and Registered Nurses (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2017) as an addition to the educational content for undergraduate programs stipulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Moreover, Nakagoshi, Mori, Tanaka, et al. (2014) noted that "it is still unclear what qualities should personnel rich in internationality possess and what goals should be attained by the time of graduation."

With this background, Convention of National Universities of Public Health and Nursing across Japan have joined the Convention of National Public Health Universities, and have been deliberating shared issues and important matters in the area of education with the objective of contributing to the development of the educational environment. As part of the discussion, the efforts made by national universities in the area of international nursing education were considered (Convention of National Public Health Universities, 2015), and it became clear that there are disparities between educational programs. However, it is not clear what exactly the educational programs implemented at the universities are and no prior studies on the subject can be found.

Thus, the current study focused on national universities that provide nursing education and described the current situation with respect to international nursing education while discussing issues requiring future attention.

We believe the findings of this study will become a fundamental contribution for further development of international nursing education in national universities providing nursing education.

## II. Research Methods

### 1. Study Design

The design was cross-sectional quantitative research using a self-administered questionnaire survey.

### 2. Survey Contents

- 1) The format of international nursing education classes
- 2) The work type of the head educators
- 3) The contents of international nursing education
  - A) Information about the current education content was collected in a free writing section.
  - B) Information about education content that will become necessary in the future (20 items): We created this items from previous research of international nursing (Nakagoshi, Mori, Tanaka, et al., 2014; Marui & Moriguchi, 2008; Minami, Shinkawa, Ohno, et al., 2013), based on the opinions of one international nursing faculty member and four international health and medical workers.

### 3. Survey Methods

#### 1) Subjects

These included teaching staff responsible for international nursing education at nursing department of national universities in Japan.

#### 2) Data Collection Method

An independently created self-administered questionnaire was distributed by mail. Of the 42 universities, responses were received from 20 universities with full-time teaching staff responsible for international nursing (response rate: 47.6%). For the 22 universities without full-time teaching staff for international nursing, enquiry information was collected by phone or email. Additionally, the syllabi officially published on the home page of each university were also referenced. As a result, information for question items—other than education content thought to be necessary in the future—was obtained from all 42 universities.

#### 3) Survey Period

July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016

#### 4) Analytical Method

For the analysis, descriptive statistics using Excel 2010 were performed.

#### 4. Ethical Considerations

The present research was conducted after obtaining approval from the Ethics Committee of the Saga University Faculty of Medicine (Approval Number: 28-9).

To obtain the consent of participants, an explanation form with the following contents was enclosed along with the questionnaire form. Mailing of the questionnaire was considered consent.

- Study purpose.
- The subject has decided to cooperate with the survey of his/her own volition and the subject will not be disadvantaged even if they decline to participate.
- Study will be conducted anonymously and without individually identifying information.
- Results data will be used only for academic purposes.

### III. Results

#### 1. The Format of International Nursing Education Classes

A breakdown of credits and class time is shown in Table 1. There were 36 universities (85.7%) that established international nursing education as a lecture course and 6 universities (14.3%) for which it was not established. There were 22 universities (52.4%) that considered it a compulsory subject and 14 universities (33.3%) that considered it an elective subject. Regarding the education time, regardless of the established format of the class, universities that set a curriculum of 1 credit and 15 hours were the most common. Universities with less than 10 hours of education time integrated this course into another basic nursing subject.

< Table 1 > Credits and lecture hours for universities practicing international nursing education by course format (n = 36)

Credits and lecture hours	Compulsory(n=22)		Elective(n=14)	
	Universities	%	Universities	%
2 credits 30 hrs	2	5.6	1	2.8
1 credit 30 hrs	2	5.6	0	0
1 credit 15 hrs	10	27.7	12	33.3
1 credit 16.5 hrs	1	2.8	0	0
Other	7	19.4	1	2.8

※ Other: 2–10 course hours within another lecture course.

※ The number of hours per 1 credit was 15–30 hours and was determined at the discretion of each university.

#### 2. Educators Teaching International Nursing

The qualifications and working patterns of the educators responsible for international nursing education are shown by class format in Table 2. There were 26 universities

(61.9%) that included full-time nurses as educators responsible for international nursing education and 16 universities (38.1%) that only had full-time nurses. Universities with multiple educators responsible for international nursing education, aside from full-time nurses, included appointed doctors, public health nurses, midwives, laboratory technicians, and epidemiologists.

<Table 2> Job type and work type of the educators responsible for international nursing education by the course format of the university (n=36)

Work Type	Job Type	Compulsory (22)		Elective (14)	
		Universities	%	Universities	%
Full Time	Nurse	9	25	7	19.3
	Doctor	2	5.6	0	0
	Non-Medical Staff	1	2.8	1	2.8
	Full-Time Nurse + Other Jobs <sup>*)</sup>	6	16.6	4	11.1
Part Time	Nurse	2	5.6	2	5.6
	Non-Medical Staff	2	5.6	0	0

\*) Other Jobs: Doctor, Public Health Nurse, Midwife, Laboratory Technician, Epidemiologist

### 3. Educational Contents Necessary in International Nursing Education

Current educational contents are shown in Table 3. Out of 36 universities, 5 (13.8%) conducted education outside of classroom lectures. To summarize, there were two universities that had overseas training in Thailand, one university that had overseas training in South Korea, one university that had training at a hospital conducting international medical care activities, and one university that had training through international exchange within Japan. Further, regarding original educational content, content such as lectures by individuals who had experience as Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers or officials of the Japan International Cooperation Agency were seen.

<Table 3> Current international nursing course format in the 42 universities (n = 42)

	Compulsory (22)	Elective (14)	No Course(6)
Only classroom lecture	20	12	0
Classroom lecture & practical training	2	2	0
Only practical training	0	0	1
No international nursing course	0	0	5

With regard to educational content necessary in the future, responses were obtained from 17 universities, the details of which are shown in Table 4. Of the 20 items, 5 items with the most votes were “understanding of different cultures,” “world health policies,” “content relating to international cooperation,” “communication ability,” and “information pertaining to country’s health insurance policy and health care system.”

<Table 4> International nursing education contents emphasized  
by university educators (n = 17)

	Number of Vote
1. Understanding of different cultures (information pertaining to culture, customs, religion)	13
2. About world health policies (policies, guidelines, etc., such as WHO)	11
3. Content relating to international cooperation (JICA, NGO, etc.)	9
4. Communication ability (languages used in that country)	8
5. Information pertaining to that country's health insurance policy and health care system	7
6. About that country's public health	6
7. About that country's sanitation conditions, such as infectious disease	5
8. About the health care of foreign residents in Japan	4
9. That country's health care statistics	4
10. About emergency aid activities (disaster nursing activities)	3
11. Travel medicine (about medical knowledge, such as what vaccinations are necessary for travel)	2
12. Information pertaining to that country's security status	2
13. About that country's nursing education system	2
14. Information pertaining to that country's infrastructure (infrastructure for daily life: roads, hospitals, etc.)	2
15. About that country's maternal and child health	1
16. Information pertaining to that country's political system	1
17. About that country's community health care	1
18. Knowledge pertaining to that country's nutrition	0
19. Knowledge pertaining to that country's traditional medicine	0
20. Other	4

#### IV. Discussion

##### 1. The Format of International Nursing Education Classes

Within nursing department of national universities in Japan, 85.7% of universities carry out international nursing education, thus indicating that majority of universities are teaching this subject. However, 52.4% treated it as a compulsory subject, and regarding class time, a maximum difference of 28 hours was revealed. Accordingly, whether international nursing education is taken during one's undergraduate career is thought to be immensely influenced by the curriculum of the university and the choice of the student. With regard to universities that do not have an established course related to international nursing, there are universities that only implement international exchange or those that, while they feel the necessity for it in the future, have not yet launched such a program.

##### 2. Educators Teaching International Nursing

Most of the educators responsible for international nursing education were nurses.

Aside from these, various medical personnel with international medical care experience were appointed as educators who were responsible for international nursing education, and it was ascertained that international nursing was widely taught as international health care. In a report investigating the improvement of basic nursing education, implemented in 2009, information regarding educators “taking advantage of outside lecturers with experience in disaster nursing or international nursing, etc.” and “the need for individuals who possess suitable clinical practice ability, the appointment of professors who can teach this type of content, and improvements in the quality of professors, etc. is necessary” were clearly noted (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009). In international nursing education, it is believed that clarification of the education objectives of each university and improvement of the quality of instructors is essential.

### **3. Educational Contents Necessary in International Nursing Education**

Regarding the education contents, in the “integration and practice of nursing” sphere, established since 2007, learning in an environment similar to clinical practice is promoted; however, presently only a small number, 13.8%, of universities are conducting practical education outside of classroom lectures, such as training overseas or international exchange. It is necessary to construct lecture contents that foster not only classroom but practical skills as well. According to a research by Sudo, it was found that, in Vietnam, “international nursing practice is experienced early in developing countries with the goal of acquiring an internationality that is continuous in nursing activities, and it has been suggested that it is essential in the training of the nursing personnel required by our globalizing international society” (Sudo & Higuchi, 2014). Further, regarding education contents that are necessary in the future, such as “understanding of different cultures” and “communication ability,” to train personnel rich in internationality with practical application ability, it is thought that the necessity of fieldwork, which incorporates real practice will continue to increase. Additionally, educators that emphasize other countries’ policies and systems pertaining to health care as education contents were also widely seen.

International nursing education is included “integration and practice of nursing” sphere clearly defined in the regulations provided by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2011). However, it is thought that these include a wide variety of contents, such as team medical care and multidisciplinary cooperation, nursing management, medical safety, integration of nursing technology, etc. For that reason, the quality and extent of international nursing education programs differ greatly from university to university according to the educational philosophy of each. Considering this, it is not easy to allot enough time to international nursing education established as its own separate course. Here, since the format of international nursing education is not regulated yet, it may be effective to establish a flexible



educational program. Even if international nursing education is not established as a course, it is possible to include the response to internationalization from that subject area within lectures in all nursing education programs. If we apply such a multilayered approach to providing international nursing education, we can contribute to training personnel rich in internationality even within the tight curricula of undergraduate programs.

## V . Study Limitations and Future Research

Current study has been concentrated only around national universities that provide nursing education and, therefore, does not fully describe the current state of international nursing education in Japan. It is important to research the matter further and provide a comparative review that would include other universities such as private universities as well. Moreover, further analysis of the situation in nursing education and a more specific review of the education program should be made in order to work towards establishing effective international nursing education.

## VI. Conclusion

In nursing department of national universities in Japan, 22 universities (52.4%) have established “international nursing” as a compulsory subject. Of these, 16 universities (38.1%) had a full-time nurse as the head educator. As international nursing education has a different curriculum in each university, there is also a large difference in the education time.

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