EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SEMINAR REPORT

Outline of the Japan-Britain Co-sponsored "British Epidemiology and Public Health Course"

Hiroshi Yanagawa, Kazunori Kodama, Yosikazu Nakamura and Tsutomu Hashimoto

Background

When the Asian Pacific Regional Meeting of International Epidemiological Association (IEA; Chairman: Dr. Kunio Aoki, President of Aichi Cancer Center) was held in Nagoya City in May 1991, Professor Walter W. Holland, former president of IEA (Head and Professor, Department of Public Health Medicine, United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals) and other epidemiologists attended that meeting from England. After discussions with many Japanese epidemiologists, it was proposed that young Japanese epidemiologists be given an opportunity to participate in training in the principles and application of practical British epidemiology and public health. Specifically, it was suggested that the British Council, whose major task is to introduce British culture, and an appropriate Japanese organization co-sponsor a course of about one-week in English. Professor Holland is a well-known epidemiologist and editor of the "Oxford Textbook of Public Health", who has made many research achievements in epidemiology including epidemiologic studies on the health effects of air pollution.

Dr. Yanagawa, who happened to be the Treasurer of IEA, was requested to prepare the course and contact the British side. So, an organizing committee of the course was started (Drs. Yanagawa, Kodama, Nakamura and Hashimoto) and preparations have been made with the guidance and support of Dr. Itsuzo Shigematsu, Chairman of Radiation Effects Research Foundation, Dr. Kenzaburo Tsuchiya, former President of University of Occupational and Environmental Health and Dr. Kunio Aoki, President of Aichi Cancer Center. And, the training course was held for one week from 23 January through 29 January 1994. We would like to briefly report this.

Outline of the Training Course

The main theme was "Method and Application of Epidemiology and Public Health—Examples in the United Kingdom—," and this course was jointly held by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom and Organizing Committee of the British Epidemiology and Public Health Course organized by the Japanese side. Financial supports were received from the British Council, Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation in Britain, and the Cooperative Foundation against Environmental Pollution in Japan. Cooperation was also received from the Japan Epidemiological Association and the Japan Public Health Association.

In attendance were scientists who are engaged in research/education in epidemiology and public health at medical schools or are active in the public health activities. The course was held with the participation of 33 members and 10 observers, who stayed at the Information and In-service Training Center for Community Medicine at Jichi Medical School for a week.

Three lecturers were invited from England, including besides the aforementioned Professor Walter W. Holland, Dr. J. Michael O'Brien (President, Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom) and Dr. Anthony J. Hedley (Head and Professor, Department of Community Medicine, University of Hong Kong). The following Japanese scientists were requested to participate in the course as cooperating lecturers: Dr. Hiroshi Yanagawa (Professor, Department of Public Health, Jichi Medical School), Dr. Kazunori Kodama (Chief, Department of Clinical Studies, Radiation Effects Research Foundation), Dr. Tsutomu Hashimoto (Professor, Department of Public Health, Wa-

Received March 15, 1994; accepted March 18, 1994.

Address for correspondence: Hiroshi Yanagawa c/o Department of Public Health, Jichi Medical School, 3311-1 Yakushiji Minamikawachi-machi Tochigi-ken 329-04, Japan.

kayama Medical College), Dr. Shoichi Endo (Director, Ashikaga Public Health Center, Tochigi Prefecture), Dr. Sadanobu Kagamimori (Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Toyama Medical and Pharmaceutical University), Dr. Masaki Nagai (Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, Jichi Medical School), and Dr. Takeshi Kawaguchi (Professor, Department of Public Health, Showa University School of Medicine). Dr. Kazunori Kodama (Chief, Department of Clinical Studies, Radiation Effects Research Foundation) and Dr. Yoshikazu Nakamura (Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health, Jichi Medical School) were asked to take charge of overall management of the course.

Lectures were presented by the British lecturers in the morning sessions, and presentations were made by the participants in the afternoon sessions based on materials prepared in advance, and these were followed by discussions. These discussions focussed on epidemiological methodology and interpretation of the research results, and problems were clarified. Although every lecture and discussion was held in English (without interpreters), there were no communication problems whatever because most participants had a good command of English.

The topics of the morning sessions were ;

- * Structure of health service in U.K. and Hong Kong
- * Role and contribution of public health physicians
- * Investigation, control and surveillance of outbreaks of disease and environmental hazards
- * Measurement of levels of health
- * Use of clinical information systems
- * Preparation of public health policy in Britain
- * Evaluation of health services
- * Decision-making in medical care, especially from viewpoints of ethics and economic efficiency
- * Measurement of needs in public health service
- * Setting objectives in health service

All of the above lectures emphasized the application of epidemiological methodology to the practice of public health activities, and long-term experiences of British lecturers were clearly reflected, which greatly impressed all participants. In Britain, epidemiologists are deeply involved in the decision of health policies and play an important role in establishing reasonable health measures. In our lectures, many examples in U.K. were described, which had a strong impact on the participants, particularly on those who are engaged in the front-line of public health administration as at a public health center.

In the afternoon sessions the participants were divided into three groups of ten members each, and with one British and one Japanese lecturer taking charge of each group, group discussions were held focusing on the research presentations of the participants. The problems in epidemiologic methodology pointed out for all presentations were ; 1) setting of the research objectives, 2) estab-

lishment of hypothesis, 3) ethical problems in epidemiological research, 4) definition of epidemiological study subjects, 5) bias and representativeness of study subjects, 6) reasonableness and evaluation of health and medical services, 7) appropriateness and reproducibility of questionnaire survey, 8) quality control of epidemiological materials, 9) overestimation of statistical tests, 10) negligence of negative data and 11) evaluation of association and cause-effect relationship. We had ample time to discuss these issues and hear the opinions of the British lecturers.

Other than the aforementioned programs, with the cooperation of the Utsunomiya Public Health Center in Tochigi Prefecture (Director: Dr. Shigetake Shiomi), we inspected the current activities of a Japanese public health center, and exchanged opinions on how they are compared with the public health and disease prevention activities in the U.K. We asked Dr. Itsuzo Shigematsu, Chairman, Radiation Effects Research Foundation and Dr. Kunio Aoki, President, Aichi Cancer Center to give special lectures entitled "Long-term Cohort Study of Atomic Bomb Survivors", and "Record Linkage Study on Tuberculosis and Cancer Based on Data in Registries", respectively. Furthermore, three other Japanese lecturers (Drs. Sadanobu Kagamimori, Kazunori Kodama and Hiroshi Yanagawa) were asked to deliver mini-lectures on recent epidemiological research subjects.

Japanese lecturers cooperating in this course have also learned much, which will be a great help to them in teaching epidemiology and public health in the future. The course was provided from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day. However, because every participant stayed at the same place, discussions with the British lecturers were held informally every day after dinner until midnight, and we rarely felt any language barrier. In the informal meetings at night, the participants communicated with one another in fluent English, which were not to be heard during the daytime sessions, and there were scenes where international goodwill was promoted.

Evaluation of the course and future direction

After completion of the course, participants were asked to evaluate each program. The comments common to every lecture were that it was rich in contents and of high level and would, as such, be directly useful in public health services in Japan. This showed that the English comprehending ability of the participants was, on the whole, high and that the purpose is fully attainable without interpreters. British lecturers also shared this opinion.

Mentioned as possible improvements in the future were ; 1) introduction of small group work, 2) increase of the number of lecturers, 3) introduction of as many case studies in both countries as possible, 4) setting a period of

about two weeks for one course, and 5) development into an international course with foreign participation.

Both course participants and lecturers were of the opinion that this course should be successively provided every two or three years to contribute to the improvement of quality of the front-line scientists of epidemiology and public health in Japan. They also shared the opinion that this course is meaningful as an instrument to promote goodwill and academic exchange between Britain and Japan.

The 14th Scientific Meeting of the International Epidemiological Association is scheduled to be held in

August 1996 in Nagoya City, and we strongly hope that we will be able to hold then our second course with the participation of the scientists from developing countries.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our deep appreciation to the professors who provided us guidance, and to the British Council, Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, the Cooperative Foundation against Environmental Pollution, the Japan Epidemiological Association and the Japan Public Health Association, which assisted us as supporting organizations.