

## Role of Occupational Health Care as Protection for Safe Railway Transport

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### 1. First of all

It is very important to support the health of railway workers such as drivers who are the very basis of the “ultimate safety” of the railway. Therefore, the JR East Company owns the occupational health centers including JR East Health Promotion Center which is directly managed by the JR East Company headquarters. However, the reality is that we are not yet fully equipped with the system to medically support based on the fact that all the human accidents occur almost every day, Japan has the high suicidal rate among other developed countries in the world, crew members’ stress care due to critical incidents, and variety of reasons for stress from workers’ point of view.

Therefore, JREU has clarified the current state and problems of safety policy of JR East Company, and the importance of occupational health and occupational doctors from worker’ point of views as well as examined how to create environment where the shift occurs from prosecuting the one who’s responsible to seeking the reasons for the problem from medical point of view.

### 2. About the Company and medical institutions at JR East

First of all, I would like to explain about the Company. The Company covers the wide marketing area (see the picture 1 / 2) from Kanto, Koshinetsu, to Tohoku and its main business is passengers’ railway transport. It owns 70 tracks, 7,512.6km marketing distance, and 16,800,000 customers use the service daily. As of April 1, 2013, 59,370 workers are working at the Company.

Next, I would like to briefly explain about the medical and health management side of work. As for the medical institute (see picture 3), the Company owns JR Tokyo General Hospital and JR Sendai General Hospital, as for health management sector, each branch office such as Morioka, Akita, Niigata, Nagano, Takasaki, Mito, and Chiba has a railway health center. Main job description is JR Tokyo General Hospital and JR Sendai General Hospital operates as General Hospital. They are certified as emergency medical facilities and local residents (non-employees) can also use the service. JR East Health Promotion center and Railway Health Checking center perform annual medical checkups, special checkups, medical aptitude tests, workplace

visit, health instruction, health counseling, and or health education.

So today, I would like to report on health management sector, and how we work on keeping safe transport through the health management of railway workers' "mind" and "body" there.

### 3. Problems of health management system for the workers' at JR East Company.

The duties contents of approximately 60,000 JR East are divided into the ,① driving section (driver, conductor, inspection repair) ,② sales department (station = booking clerk, wicket, transportation, travel agency) ,③ facilities section (maintenance of tracks, electricity, signal communication, engineering works, machine, building) ,④ plan section (the head office, branch office) ,⑤ management section (manager of the work-site operations organization) ,⑥ medical care section (hospital, medical examination center). And the duty system includes ,① daily service ,② vigil duty ,③ shift works.

Health management is done at annual checkups at Railway Health Checkup Centers at each branch office. Furthermore, drivers and conductors who are on board with customers are expected to take another tests designated by the Ministry of Land and Transport. Also, the workers who work real late at night shifts, specific health checkups and, the workers who worked Asbestos or harmful duties has another specific tests. Then if one wishes he/she can take the all-round medical test and in that case the Company bare the partial costs.

As such, there are many types of health examination, and the results will be distributed to individual for information. When one can find the abnormality, he/she will be informed about the hospital to visit for the further checkups or re-examination.

Other than examinations, occupational doctors or health care managers visit workplace periodically, participating safety and health committee as well as counseling based on the results of health checkups and all-round medical examination. Also, targeting young workers at the age of 30 to educate them called in the seminar called "Fresh-up Seminar" by so doing health education or health instruction based on various needs and situations are offered and educate the workers to be more abled self-care.

There is not many companies offer the health care of the employee by such contents in Japan either. This is the realization that "the safety is the biggest mission of the transportation business" in the JR East safety general plan and leaves the basic situation of the labor and management called the principle of human being first carrying it.

However, this health care system is not without a problem. For example, because

there is not a law or a rule for the system in maintaining medical examination equipment also depending on the branch office resources, there are few places maintained regularly and it is not the unified policy to do so.

In addition, the industrial physicians' monthly workplace round of inspection is regulated for the workplaces more than 50 workers by a law. The workplace round of inspection enforcement rate in a center with full staff is approximately 100%, but the center with limited industrial physician cannot perform this. Furthermore, a local industrial physician is only one of group leaders so when they participate in a branch office chief meeting of the district and ask for the enhancement of the medical system, "a lack of funding". The authority in the company is very low while being an industrial physician, and it is with the present conditions that a medical standpoint is not reflected for the organization of the company long in this way.

In the central health promotion center, there are the counselor's office for the mental care residing a regular psychiatrist and community health nurse, a clinical psychologist of the part-time service, and the mental support system that supports consultation and worker's reinstatement. However, in the local medical examination center, the counselor's office of mental health and the full-time staff for it are not provided so an industrial physician and a community health nurse must do all the work. At present time, many have asked for more appropriate consultation space that can protect privacy and hoped for the enhancement of training and education so that they have more power to gain understanding from the boss and work place, also wanting exclusive full-time duty staff for the area.

In addition, for the very important medical aptitude test such as eyesight or the hearing ability, the standard are fixed to keep the security of the railroad, however, inspection contents and the method in each medical examination center are not equal although it supposed to be the same through all companies. For example, there is the place that the circulatory organ inspection such as an electrocardiogram or the blood pressure measurement by the temporarily medical aptitude test for type III driving workers (excluding driver, conductor, and station worker) in the facility section. In addition, the number of times of the eye test varies with the place that there is not as a place setting a limit to the number of times. In such situation, all employees do not receive the medical aptitude test at the same level or environment.

Because of the lack of staff in each medical examination center, and absence of a laboratory technician and a Skiagrapher, many centers dispatch those professionals only at the time of medical examination from the health promotion center. When we compare the local branch with the metropolitan center, the budget are not equally

distributed and the resources of the regional office under the present conditions in comparison with a metropolitan area and the supplement of the staff such as an industrial physician or a community health nurse remains very small number. We think that it should be all company unification measures for this occupational medical exam because of the health promotion and examination system is the main source of railway safety.

#### 4. The present conditions about the mental health of the worker

In recent years the percentage of workers who are feeling the strong uneasiness, trouble, stress about work and the career becomes higher as industrial structure and economy suicide rate have changed. Japan has already a high number of the suicides rate, that is more than 30,000 people, and the number of the workers who committed suicides are also approximately 8,000-9,000 people. The influence that the issue of mental health gives in a worker, the family, the workplace and the society becomes bigger and bigger. In addition, it leads to an accident, the trouble by the drop of concentration and the concentration when I fall into mental health disorder. When I am engaged in the driver of the railroad in particular and driving-related duties, not only the person but also a visitor or the co-worker may threaten neighboring security and health, and, as for planning the maintenance increase of the heart, it is with a very important problem.

However, some factors of the stress in the workplace cannot be removed by the worker alone, therefore, the aggressive promotion of the mental health care by the company is necessary. Also the enforcement of organized and premeditated measures plays a big role.

#### 5. The on-site situation in JR East

I heard a story from the member of an association who worked on the site of each system about the present conditions of the mental health every type of job. In the driving sections such as a driver, a conductor, the inspection repair that high-school graduates were often found, a high person is often discouraged at educational background and the pride by one mistake in university graduates recently before. There is many it in the person who has not experienced a failure by entrance into a school of higher grade in particular or finding employment, and it is supposed the case which going does not notice crew nobody duty again by a slight change because main. It is often prolonged by treatment after it is aggravated to be a problem in particular without saying it anxiously if I make consultation of men Tal the boss and an industrial

physician when boarding may be taken down.

At a ticketing window, it is shouted for the delays of the train by a visitor and, in the sales departments such as stations, often becomes the mental health disorder for the trouble with the visitor.

In the facilities sections such as maintenance of tracks, electricity, signal communication, engineering works, a machine, the building, mental health disorder often develops to the person who moved to the point (a branch office or order) that I do not hope for. I worked in a group at the age of the spot, but personal work becomes important, and the pressure on duties contributes to have moved in the branch offices. In addition, it is frequent in a young person, but because I am not used to being angry, I am depressed immediately just to have been said to be it a little and try it hard too much because it wants to be admitted by the company, and I mind an evaluation, and the person that it cannot be said often becomes the mental health disorder even if ill-conditioned.

## 6. Summary

### ① Improving the occupational doctors' quality and rights

As for the rights of occupational doctors, it should not be the chief of the local workforce level but at least branch office's director level, and their positions must allow them to speak up their opinions standing based on the medical perspective to both the company and workers. Then, occupational doctors must obtain the knowledge of railway related things as well as the value for the safety, and in order to take social responsibility as the public service industry, they must build the trusting relationship with workers, and participate periodically to the safety and health commissions or once a month work checkup which is obligated by the law. By so doing the doctors should deeply understand the work environment and workers and consult them from medical perspectives.

### ② Unification of all companies' medical aptitude tests and clearing distrust

For every worker who work in the railway industry, to receive the fair and equal health care and occupational medical tests, it is necessary for unify the testing system and rules of each center with accurate technology for the same level of judgment. Also the industrial health institutions must be needed by the employees by explaining and discussing the conditions of workers including the duration of treatment and the visions to and among the work leader, doctor, and the person who has the issue prior to decide whether or not he/she can be on duty.

③ Unification of all companies' mental health system and strengthen

In order to further improve the mental health care at work, it is important to keep more than just enough numbers of occupational health staff as well as establish the support system of workers' mental health care "how to". It is also very important that improving the awareness of the workers and workers' understanding of what to do with own stress. It is also important that the management side is to try to improve the work environment and reduce the causes of the stress at work, by so doing prevent the mental health problem or worsening of the conditions. Furthermore, if the stress check system is introduced according to the law, we can use the information in order to grasp the idea about the work environment and create a healthier environment much sooner. We, the staff members of the occupational health section, would like to discuss and create the policy with the companies for prevention and early detection of mental health problem, and support for returning back to work. For this reason, we need more privacy secure room and space, professional mental health staff, and the company should advertise how they will push the health care for their employees and create the plan for mental health.

7. Lastly

Not only is it important to seek out the company atmosphere that focusing on finding the cause instead of penalizing the person in order to protect the safety of railway, but also imperative for the company to protect health of workers and offers safe transportation, and they are the common agenda of railway industry around the world.

Currently, JR East Company has the safety project section in the headquarters only working on safety policy measures and it oversees safety policy by crossing every section. I would think, however, to have the section specify the health measures focusing on health of workers.

Establishing independence of occupational doctors as well as occupational health institutions, keeping the mental health by building the trust between the company and workers, and actively promoting the mental health care in order to create safety of public transportation are too very necessary. In closing, I would like to express my thanks for having me in this meeting and in return receiving your advice. By so doing, I would like your attention to the importance of effective health management for our workers. Thank you.