

VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Abstract

The number of international students continues to grow each year, breaking a record with about 31 million as of May 2019 in Japan. One of the reasons for the increase in international students is the “300,000 International Students Plan” as part of the “Global Strategy” launched by the Japanese government in 2008. As the international students’ population increased, a number of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) among international students were reported. The government does not show clear guidance on VPDs for international students and leaves the decision to each school. This study aimed: (a) to determine if Japanese universities and Japanese language schools have guidelines for preventing and controlling VPDs for international students and their staff and (b) to clarify the problems associated with VPDs among international students to inform the development of guidelines for VPD prevention and control. This was a descriptive cross-sectional study with data from a survey of Japanese universities and Japanese language schools and international students on VPDs. Fisher’s exact test was used to analyze the comparison between 69 Japanese universities and 137 Japanese language schools. Seventy-four international students responded to the online survey. This survey revealed the international students’ current VPDs status and their living environment. The School Health and Safety Act maintain the international students’ health at universities. In contrast, the health of international students at Japanese language schools is controlled by the Ministry of Justice’s “public notice standards for Japanese language institutions,” but neither mentioned the need for vaccinations. International students are vulnerable to VPDs by their living environment and low vaccination

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status. Guidelines for VPDs for international students need to be developed to protect international students' health and prevent VPDs among the public.

Keywords: vaccine- preventable diseases, international students, Japanese language school, School Health and Safety Act