

Emergency Medical Support System for Foreign Residents and Tourists  
April 21, 2018

Co-hosted by Hokkaido Multinational Support Community, Sapporo Public Health Office and Sapporo International Communication Plaza Foundation with the Cooperation of the Sapporo Fire Bureau.

More than 50 people gathered to hear about the latest developments in Sapporo City in providing emergency medical support.

Dr. Koichi Yano, Director General of the Public Health Office of the City of Sapporo, gave the first presentation. He explained that when he was a young doctor living in the United States, his wife had a medical emergency. They had a lot of difficulty in communication when seeking emergency medical help. From that experience he developed a deep interest in providing multilingual emergency medical support.

In recent years the number of foreign residents and tourists has been steadily increasing along with the need for multilingual medical services. First, we can get information about emergency services on the City of Sapporo website (<https://www.city.sapporo.jp/city/english/>). Click on 'In an Emergency' for information in English, Chinese, Korean and Russian.

If you have a medical problem, but are not sure what to do, you can phone the Emergency Medical Consultation Center at #7119 for those in Sapporo and some surrounding areas. You can have a tripartite call with a nurse, and an interpreter. Based upon your responses, the nurse will help you decide which hospital to go to.

In case of a medical emergency which requires an ambulance dial 119, and if necessary you can have a tripartite call to explain where you are and your condition. When the ambulance comes, you and the paramedics can communicate by the use of a multilingual voice translation application, VoiceTra. This can handle 15 foreign languages, and will enable the paramedics to know which hospital is best for you.

Sapporo Higashi Tokushukai Hospital (tel. 011-722-1110) has an International Medical Room with staff that can respond in seven languages.

The second presenter was Saori Kitama of the Sapporo English Medical Interpreters' Group (SEMI). This is a volunteer interpreting service of 27 members of various backgrounds. The group meets every week for three hours to improve their knowledge and skills. If you would like their service to assist you, due to your limited Japanese ability, send an email to [semisapporo@gmail.com](mailto:semisapporo@gmail.com) in advance. A link to the SEMI handout, which can be viewed in Japanese or English, is available on the HMSC Archive page for this event. <http://www.hokkaidomsc.org/archives/>.

The last presenter was Mr. Muranishi, a paramedic from the Fire Bureau, who explained about the work and background of paramedics in Japan. It is important to remember that ambulance and rescue services in Japan are under the direction of the Fire Bureau. A short video clip about the VoiceTra system developed by NICT was shown. This video with English subtitles will also be available through a link on the HMSC Archive page for the event.

He then conducted a live phone call demonstration of the VoiceTra system, using a British participant from the audience to pretend he had an injury from a snowboarding accident the previous day, and was not able to communicate in Japanese. The emergency response center nurse used an interpreter to ascertain the best course of action to take, based upon the answers to the questions she asked the person seeking assistance.

This was an excellent and very useful meeting, with a lot of information. Please refer to the Power Point files and supplementary handouts accessible from our website for more detailed information. <http://www.hokkaidomsc.org/archives/>

Reported by Kathleen Riggins