

Symposium | CFI : [Symposium 38] Cultural Competence - essential skills for mental professionals

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[Symposium 38] Cultural Competence - essential skills for mental professionals

Moderator: Itsuo Asai (Heart Clinic Medical Corporation)

[SY-38-04] Cultural competence: the changing social perceptions from stigmatization to understanding of mental health issues in Japan in recent years

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The speaker is interested in the change in public perception of mental health issues in Japan, a country that has undergone acculturation over time, and will discuss the changing of social perception showing the two examples. First, Japan is known for having one of the highest numbers of suicide in the world: for 10 years since 1997, the number of suicides exceeded 30,000 in every year, and the government has been working to reduce the number through suicide prevention measures. Mental health measures have been positioned as an important national project, and educational activities on depression have become popular. Depression among workers has been regarded as a private illness, which means there are no relationship between it's occurrence and work environment. Therefore the rate of worker's compensation applications had not been high. In these days, the number of recognitions for worker's compensation, including suicides, has been increasing year by year, as the problems such as long working hours and harassment in the workplace have become more visible. The second is the increase in the number of foreign workers. Compared to other countries, Japan has a decline birth rate and increase of aging population, and the decision to accept foreign workers was made with the goal of securing the labor force. Today, we see workers of foreign origin working alongside Japanese in every workplace, but there still seem to be many issues regarding mutual communication. Although foreign workers are also residents of Japan, it has been pointed out that the clients have not received the necessary improvements in the areas of housing, public services, medical care, and education. In particular, in the field of psychiatric care, there are only limited number of facilities that can treat foreigners, and urgent measures are needed to address this issue. Japan, supported by inbound demand, welcomes many foreign tourists, but it should be known that mental health problems are not limited to Japanese people in the transition to multicultural society, and I would like to emphasize the need to enhance the ability to understand cultures.