

Symposium | Trauma : [Symposium 46] The Path to Recovery: Trauma's Impact on mental health and Therapeutic Interventions

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(Conference Room A)

[Symposium 46] The Path to Recovery: Trauma's Impact on mental health and Therapeutic Interventions

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[SY-46-01] Addiction in Japan: A Perspective Informed by Adverse Childhood Experiences

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Japan has been considered a relatively “safe” country in terms of substance abuse. Indeed, the prevalence of alcohol dependence is around 1.1%; lifetime cannabis use was 1.5%, and methamphetamine use was 0.5%. However, these statistics do not necessarily indicate that Japan faces fewer issues related to substance abuse. In recent decades, it has been increasingly recognized that addiction is linked to adverse childhood experiences (ACE). Despite this, trauma-informed approaches to addiction care remain underutilized in Japan. People with substance use disorders often face stigma and discrimination, even within medical settings, which significantly hinders access to appropriate treatment. It is estimated that only 5% of individuals with alcohol use disorder receive the care they need. Another growing concern is the abuse of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs among younger generations, particularly among females. Between 2018 and 2020, the number of ambulance transports for OTC drug overdoses increased by 2.3 times. The number of patients with OTC and prescription drug addiction in psychiatric care facilities increased sixfold from 2012 to 2020. A nationwide study in 2021 revealed that one in every sixty high school students had misused OTC drugs. The ACE survey conducted at Kanagawa psychiatric center suggests that individuals with OTC and prescription addiction tend to behave as a “good one.” Excessive discipline or unreasonable expectations during childhood can lead to overadaptation, where emotions are ignored or suppressed as a coping mechanism. These experiences are frequently concealed within superficially non-problematic environments and may go unnoticed by others and sometimes even by individuals themselves. The need to raise awareness of these subtle adverse experiences is becoming evident. In this symposium, we will examine the current state of addiction in Japan from the perspective of ACE and discuss strategies for addressing these critical challenges.