

Symposium | Medical Anthropology : [Symposium 72] Anthropology Philosophy, Spirituality, and Psychiatry

📅 Sat. Sep 27, 2025 3:50 PM - 5:20 PM JST | Sat. Sep 27, 2025 6:50 AM - 8:20 AM UTC 🏛️ Session Room 1 (Main Hall A)

## [Symposium 72] Anthropology Philosophy, Spirituality, and Psychiatry

Moderator: Tsuyoshi Akiyama (World Federation for Mental Health), Goffredo Bartocci (World Association of Cultural Psychiatry, Co-Founder and Past President)

### [SY-72-01] Dementia as a basis of neurodiversity in Japan: A Medical Anthropological Perspective

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Keywords : dementia、 Japan、 Medical Anthropology、 neurodiversity

In an age of increasing obsession with the healthy brain, how can we talk about the brain in psychiatry in a way that fosters understanding and empathy? How can we begin to care for the brain in a way that does not alienate those who already suffer from neurobiological diseases such as dementia? These are questions that people are beginning to grapple with in Japan, which currently stands as the world's number-one "super-aged" society. With one-third of the population already over age 65, the number of people afflicted with dementia exceeds five million, and those with MCI (mild cognitive impairments) five million. Drawing on more than a decade of fieldwork among dementia experts, patients, and their families, with a focus on a cutting-edge neuropsychiatric department in Japan, I first want to illuminate how doctors explain dementia symptoms through neuroimages as a means of repairing strained family relationships and mitigating patients' sense of loneliness. I will then discuss how such "brain talk" is taken up by the dementia patient movement in their attempt to challenge the current obsession with the healthy brain. I ask in what ways these "brain talks" can lead not to alienation and social fragmentation but rather to a broader scope for empathy and social empowerment.