

Meet the 2nd TOMODACHI J&J Disaster Nursing Training Program Participants

*(Alphabetical Order)

**Miku Aihara**

School of Nursing, Fukushima Medical University, 3rd Year
Hometown: Fukushima City, Fukushima Prefecture

The three main things I would like to learn from this program are: the fundamentals of disaster nursing, how people overseas approach disaster nursing, and the differences between the healthcare systems in Japan and other countries. In particular, I'd like to focus on mental healthcare and on support procedures for unpredictable situations. I am determined to do my best during the program and be mindful of my eagerness to learn. When I studied nursing in Thailand in my first year of university, I was able to realize first-hand the differences in environment and the healthcare system. I would like to continue broadening my perspective on healthcare by meeting and listening to ideas from people overseas.

**Miki Akeshita**

Department of Nursing, Iwate Prefectural University School of Nursing, 4th Year
Hometown: Miyako City, Iwate Prefecture

Five years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and my own memories of it have begun to fade. I began to think about the disaster again, and decided to participate in this program in preparation for the next disaster that may occur. I would like to take action in order to try to avert crises. Although I volunteered at the time of the disaster, I have not been able to carry out continued support for the relief effort, and in future I want to be involved in ongoing support for disasters not just in Tohoku and Japan, but also around the world. As well as disaster nursing for immediate relief, I would like to assist in problems within the local community, such as the challenges of living in temporary housing, the struggles of building a new community after relocating from temporary housing, and the isolation of the elderly.

**Rina Ishikawa**

Department of Health Nursing, Tohoku Fukushi University School of Health Sciences, 3rd Year
Hometown: Shiogama City, Miyagi Prefecture

I decided I want to learn about psychological care because my great grandfather fell ill and passed away while living in a shelter after the Great East Japan Earthquake. The Great East Japan Earthquake left many who became psychologically exhausted from the life that followed the disaster, suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or were psychologically damaged by the quake, and thus I believe that in addition to learning about disaster nursing, it is necessary to learn about mental healthcare. I would like to further my studies in the United States, and in the future, become a nurse who is able to preserve the quality of life for disaster survivors.

**Kurumi Oikawa**

Department of Nursing, Tohoku University School of Medicine, 3rd year
Hometown: Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture

I was a third-year junior high school student when the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster struck, and my house and everything connected to my daily life were all washed away. In the initial days after the disaster, I stayed at my great-grandmother's house, but I started going back and forth to the local evacuation center to help out with the provision of emergency meals. It was difficult for me to see ordinarily energetic people become a completely different person due to the stress of living at the evacuation center and the difficulties the elderly were having. Amid all that, watching the way the medical teams from different areas would earnestly listen and help the evacuees made a deep impression on me. I felt that I want to be able to assist others in the future in times of disaster, and that is when I began to become interested in disaster nursing. After the disaster, I lived in temporary housing for three years during high school, and I felt the importance not only of assistance immediately after a disaster but also of sustained care afterwards. In the future I want to return to my hometown and support the local people, as well as help prepare for future disasters that may happen someday. For that and to expand my own horizons, I want to see with my own eyes and experience first-hand medical care training in the United States.

**Chiharu Sasaki**

Faculty of Nursing, Iwate Prefectural University, 4th year
Hometown: Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture

As someone who has been both a disaster victim and a victim supporter, as well as someone who is studying nursing, I feel it is important for me to communicate my own experiences and knowledge to others. When the earthquake happened in Tohoku, I was unable to return to my home for some time, and I experienced feelings of hopelessness and anxiety as it was very difficult to understand the reality of the situation. In my volunteer activities, I visited families living in temporary housing and other housing near the Iwate coast. I saw firsthand the many issues that they faced, such as health problems, the struggle to rebuild communities, and the difficulty of sustaining volunteer activities. In the future, I want to become a school nurse. In the United States, I want to learn about disaster countermeasures and care and ways to communicate that information to future generations. Subsequently, I want to make use of my own experiences and knowledge I have gained in the event of another disaster occurs and for the education of children who have not experienced a natural disaster.

**Haruki Sawada**

Sendai Midwifery Nursing Sendai Medical Center Affiliated Sendai Midwifery nursing school, 2nd year
Hometown: Tooda District, Miyagi Prefecture

I developed a strong interest in disaster nursing when I was in high school. After experiencing the Great East Japan Earthquake and disaster, I became involved in charity concerts and activities that supported the rebuilding of disaster-hit areas. I want to make the most out of my experiences while participating in the TOMODACHI J&J Disaster Nursing Training Program by absorbing as much knowledge as I can and broadening my perspectives. I am particularly interested in learning about the state-of-the-art medical care and mental healthcare measures in the United States, how these efforts differ from those in Japan, and how they can be introduced into Japan. Watching a nurse care for my grandmother after the disaster, I could understand that a great deal of physical care is needed for one person and recognize the importance of healing psychological wounds. In the future, I would like to become a nurse who can communicate Japan's disaster measures and medical care used in the reconstruction of Tohoku to the world. I want to identify and understand the expected roles of nurses in times of disasters while clarifying my further studies.

**Aoi Suto**

Department of Nursing, Sendai Seiyo Gakuin College, 3rd year

Hometown: Motoyoshi District, Miyagi Prefecture

When the tsunami struck in the Great East Japan Earthquake and disaster, I witnessed the boundary between life and death. Even now, I clearly remember the circumstances and the great sense of helplessness I felt at that time. In the future, I would like to become an international nurse who can make quick decisions and take correct action whenever a natural disaster occurs anywhere in the world. Even if an incident is classified as a “disaster” I have come to understand that the type of damage and injuries and the medical interventions differ according to the region and type of disasters. This was apparent after the tsunami devastation of the coastal areas in the Great East Japan Earthquake and the collapse of houses and fire damage in the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. It has motivated me to deepen my knowledge and understanding of disaster nursing. In addition to absorbing this knowledge, I want to communicate my experiences and lessons learned from the Tohoku disaster, such as not taking daily life for granted, the importance of preparing for a disaster beforehand and to protect their lives first.

**Yuka Takae**

Department of Nursing, Tohoku University School of Medicine, 4th year

Hometown: Minamisoma City, Fukushima Prefecture

I would like to learn about responses and countermeasures in times of disasters and to make use of that knowledge in my work in the future. I want to help those suffering as a result of disasters and to return what I learn in this program to people in need. Having experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake and disaster when I was in high school, I understand the horror of a disaster, and it has motivated me to help with the recovery from disasters. Medical and psychological care for victims is one of the crucial areas for long-term assistance. I want to learn about and become proficient in methods necessary for assisting people who are grappling with long-term physical disabilities and psychological trauma caused by disasters. In the Study Tour in the United States, I would like to learn about the building of disaster systems, from the collection of information just after a disaster occurs to actual responses on site, and about long-term assistance methods. I would particularly like to learn about those systems and measures that can be introduced into Japan.

**Nao Chiba**

School of Nursing, Miyagi University, 4th year

Hometown: Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture

The reason I became interested in a nursing career was the Great East Japan Earthquake and disaster. My hometown, Ishinomaki City, suffered a great deal of damage, and not being able to act while watching the reality in front of me has left me with a lot of regret and dismay. Because of that experience, I am now aiming to become a nurse who can respond quickly in a disaster, and in the future I want to make use of my capabilities for communities that may be hit by disasters. I also want to utilize the experience I gain from this program to become a member of DMAT in the future and to act effectively at disaster sites as a disaster response nurse. After the Tohoku disaster, people were very aware of the threat of earthquakes and the importance of disaster preparedness. Now that five years have passed since the disaster, people are becoming complacent again. I want to deeply think about disaster response and communicate it to people both within and outside of Japan.

**Hitomi Baba**

School of Nursing, Fukushima Hospital Nursing School, 2nd year
Hometown: Koriyama City, Fukushima Prefecture

I experienced the disaster in Fukushima when I was a second-year junior high school student. After that, I wanted to become a nurse, and I remember thinking to myself, “If I become a nurse when a disaster happens, I can save people’s lives.” I believe that the reason medical staff were able to take quick action was because they had training beforehand on disaster response based on experience from past disasters. In order to provide medical care under difficult conditions and with limited supplies and equipment, it is important to learn disaster nursing procedures and to be prepared to put them into practice at any time. In the future, I want to work as a midwife who can listen to people’s concerns and give them a sense of security while making the most out of abilities. I want to participate in this program in order to learn about international ideas regarding disaster nursing and to feed that knowledge back to the community.

**Yuka Midorikawa**

Department of Nursing, Nursing School of Shirakawa Kosei General Hospital, 2nd year
Hometown: Ishikawa District, Fukushima Prefecture

I was working in the United States in 2011, when the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster hit. At that time, all the communications networks like the telephone and e-mail were in disarray, and I remember spending very anxious days because I could not find out whether my family in Fukushima was safe or not. It was also difficult to get information about the disaster through the Internet and the news, and I understood what it was like to experience uncertainty about the reliability of information since there were a lot of misinformation and harmful rumors circulating about the disaster. One reason I want to participate in this program is that I’d like to learn more about the sharing of information when disasters happen. I want to have a greater understanding of the differences in disaster response in the United States and Japan, such as contacting local residents, securing evacuation sites, assisting victims, supporting reconstruction, and so on. I want to become a nurse who can feed knowledge to communities that need medical help when a disaster hits and to nursing students and healthcare workers who are interested in disaster nursing.

**Kaho Yokoyama**

Department of Nursing, Tohoku University School of Medicine, 2nd year
Hometown: Natori City, Miyagi Prefecture

I was a second-year junior high school student when the Tohoku disaster hit. When I saw the Self-Defense Force members and volunteers carrying out their rescue mission, I felt that in the future, I want to work that helps people, so I aspired to become a nurse. Through this program, I want to learn a lot about disaster nursing in the United States and then communicate the knowledge and experience to as many healthcare workers as I can. I would like to be a bridge to help disaster nursing and medical care in times of disaster, to ensure it proceeds more smoothly in Japan. I am most interested in midwifery and since access to maternity clinics and facilities and necessary equipment is greatly limited in the event of natural disasters, I want to learn about the kinds of systems and initiatives they have in America to respond to disasters while ensuring safe deliveries. I would like to expand my perspectives through the experience and knowledge I gain through this program, and do my utmost to contribute, even a little, to the development of disaster medical care and nursing in Japan.