

Experience of Activities in Q&A about Radiation in Daily Life after Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident

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1. Introduction of Young Researchers Association in Japan Health Physics Society

Young Researchers Association (YRA) was launched by seven members, and then officially approved by Japan Health Physics Society (JHPS). As of the present time, YRA is comprised of about 40 engineers and researchers younger than 36 years old. They are working in private companies, research institutions or academia, and specialize in radiation protection, environmental radioactivity, etc. One of our purposes is to exchange information and discuss latest knowledge among the members via periodical workshops and mailing list. We have also been engaged in educational activities on radiation protection to the public. In addition, it is intended to cultivate domestic and international relationships with young people of other scientific bodies, by taking an opportunity as this EAN workshop.

2. Activity experience after Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident

In the present presentation, we would like to share our experience after Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident. After the accident on 11 March 2011, a large amount of artificial radionuclides like cesium and iodine were released to the environment. This fact made the residents upset and anxious who lived in the vicinity of Fukushima, and drew attention of people throughout Japan.

Immediately after the accident, volunteers from JHPS created a website named 'Questions and Answers about Radiation in Daily Life' in order to share right information on radiation protection. They carefully answered all questions posted on the website from the public. In August 2011, Steering Committee of this Q&A site was officially established in JHPS. The Committee consisted of 53 members, 40 of which were from YRA and Students Association of JHPS. As a center of the Committee, YRA had been engaged in the communication with the public on the internet for approximately two years since August 2011. During this period, the number of the questions reached about 1870, and we replied to all of them. The analysis of the characteristics of the questions revealed that a major portion of the questioners was mothers with infants. In particular, young mothers were worried about the health effects of radiation on their children. Also, many questions were related to the circumstances of the accident that were announced by the government or reported by mass media. This analysis allowed us to know the transition of the types of information demanded by people facing the situation changing every second.

Besides, we published a book on the Q&A on July 2013 for sharing the correct information on radiation and our activity for the two years. This book presents the essence of all Q&A and the result of the time series analysis of the questions and questioners.

We believe that the above activity has contributed considerably to better understanding of radiation to the public in Japan.