

Physician's Letter: People Need to Learn about Radioactivity and Health from Doctors – For the best interests of patients, we always follow the Oath of Hippocrates.

Hakumei Oh
M.D. (Hematology/Internal Medicine),PhD.



[Introduction](by editorial staffs)

Renowned for his academic achievement and medical treatment work, Dr. Hakumei Oh sent GEPR a contributing article expressing his concern over the propagation of scientifically groundless information that is inciting a crisis atmosphere with respect to the current situation of radioactivity and health in Japan.

Unfortunately, in the wake of the Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Power Plant accident today, an accurate opinion in Japan about the low likelihood of health hazards resulting from scattered radioactive substances meets with emotional rejoinders from certain corners, who question why the dangers of radioactivity are not emphasized. Despite this situation, GEPR deeply respects the efforts of Dr. Oh, compelled as a physician in his mission to inform society.

GEPR will continue defending experts who provide accurate opinions to society and continue promoting activities for the free dissemination of opinions.

Since the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident, interest in radiation exposure has surged. Certainly, harm from exposure associated with the nuclear accident must be prevented; however, the disproportionate coverage has caused ordinary citizens to become much more fearful than necessary about the situation.

For instance, guarding against any contamination by Fukushima Prefecture agricultural products is understandable, but the refusal to use firewood, fireworks, or concrete bridge girders is simply mass hysteria. Amidst this type of hurtful rumor-mongering and pointlessly worrisome tenor of the press, doctors, who have the correct knowledge, must actively speak up and move forward with supportive activities in the first instance.

Yet such words that soothe the fear of patients often become the source of a doctor being branded a "government mouthpiece." Under the current situation, doctors are not necessarily given the proper recognition or assessment. Nonetheless, before being misled by the rumor-mongering about radioactivity, people should listen to what doctors with good sense have to say.

In particular, I appeal to the mothers. According to some press accounts, an increasing number of children have been "evacuated" from Tohoku and Kanto to Kyushu and Okinawa areas since the earthquake and nuclear accident. I was surprised and troubled to learn how far the disproportionate reaction to radiation exposure had extended.

In many cases, the mothers have accompanied these children, and a national network has apparently been established to support the people in their isolation. I can only wonder at the tremendous mental and monetary burden that these children and mothers face.

As a consequence of the nuclear accident, a certain quantity of radioactive substances has dispersed beyond the zone of the accident, and thus radiation exposure must be fully guarded against. Nonetheless, the "hot" spots detected with relatively high amounts of radiation do not affect human health in daily living.

Many honest doctors are explaining these facts through their speaking activities and urging everyone to remain calm. I ask mothers who are considering a "evacuation" to judge matters calmly. Those doctors who have sworn by the Teaching of Hippocrates (see note) will never allow a patient to make a health-harming decision.

Note: Teaching of Hippocrates

The text is also called the Hippocratic Oath, considered to be compiled in the 4th century BC by Hippocrates, the father of western medicine. The text found use in western European medical education from the 16th century onward, and continues to form the code of practice for physicians in every country today, although with some variation. The Hippocratic Oath is a sworn statement for doctors to engage with patient health and benefit as the highest priorities. Surgery and fetal abortion, however, are recognized in modern medicine, and referring sections are omitted.

The Oath of Hippocrates

(from [the Kanazawa Medical University webpage](#):)

I swear by Apollo the Physician, and Aesculapius, and Health, and All-heal, and all the gods and goddesses, that, according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this oath and this stipulation-to reckon him who taught me this art equally dear to me as my parents, to share my substance with him, and relieve his necessities if required; to look upon his offspring in the same footing as my own brothers, and to teach them this art, if they shall wish to learn it, without fee or stipulation; and that by precept, lecture, and every other mode of instruction, I will impart a knowledge of the art to my own sons, and those of my teachers, and to disciples bound by a stipulation and oath according to the law of medicine, but to none others. I will follow that system of regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients, and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous. I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel ; and in like manner I will not give to a woman a pessary to produce abortion. With purity and with holiness I will pass my life and practice my art. I will not cut persons laboring under the stone, but will leave this to be done by men who are practitioners of this work. Into whatever houses I enter, I will go into them for the benefit of the sick, and will abstain from every voluntary act of mischief and corruption of females or males, of freemen and slaves. Whatever, in connection with my professional practice, or not in connection with it, I see or hear, in the life of men, which ought not to be spoken of abroad, I will not divulge, as reckoning that all such should be kept secret. While I continue to keep this oath unviolated, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and the practice of the art, respected by all men, in all times ! But should I trespass and violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot!
