The average lifespan in 1995 in Japan was 76.38 years among men and 82.85 years among women, and in 2005 it was 78.56 years among men and 85.52 years among women (1). As the average lifespan increases in Japan, the importance of caring for the elderly continues to grow. In Japan, the number of suicides increased rapidly in 1998, and has continued to rise since then. Suicide prevention among the elderly is an important subject in Japan (2). Therefore, we examined age- and gender-classified suicide rates by age group starting at age 10 years in 2007 and 2008, as reported in the vital statistics in the Journal of Health and Welfare Statistics (1), and we discussed essential steps for continuous suicide prevention among the elderly based on the results.

The suicide rates (/100,000 population) among men were ranked highest, 63.0% in the 85-year or over age group, 58.5% in the 55−59-year age group, 54.4% in the 50−54-year age group, 52.0% in the 45−49-year age group and 51.2% in the 60−64-year age group in 2007, and highest, 58.6% in the 85 years and over age group, 57.0% in 55−59, 51.5% in 50−54, 51.0% in 60−64 and 49.2% in 45−49-year age groups in 2008. The suicide rates among women were ranked highest, 25.8% in the 85 years and over age group, 20.5% in the 80−84-year age group, 19.8% in the 70−74-year age group, 18.7% in the 75−79-year age group and 18.6% in the 65−69-year age group in 2007, and highest, 21.7% in the 85 years and over age group, 20.4% in the 80−84-year age group, 19.3% in the 75−79-year age group, 18.3% in the 65−69-year age group and 17.8% in the 70−74-year age group in 2008. Based on these results, we think that suicide prevention among the elderly is important among both men and women in Japan. “Health problems” among men and women 60 years and over in Japan is an important causative factor to address, and “family problems” among both men and women and “economic and life problems” among men are also causative factors that can be addressed (2).

Those working in all fields relevant to suicide prevention need to employ appropriate preventive measures (3).

REFERENCES