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Note

An attempt to support by the Japanese society of travel and health for increasing travel clinics^{☆, ☆ ☆}



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ABSTRACT

In recent years, both the number of Japanese travelers to foreign countries and foreign travelers who visit Japan have increased remarkably, and the risk of travelers suffering various infectious diseases is also increasing. In many western countries travel clinics commonly perform medical consultations, vaccinations, and issue prescriptions. However, travel clinics are not yet popular in Japan. In 2011, Japanese society of travel and health (JSTH) began a support project for travel clinic with a goal of increasing their number throughout the country. The project included the release of a manual for education, training, equipment, details of medical treatment, sources of information for travel clinic opening on the JSTH website (http://jstah.umin.jp/20TravelClinicSupport/manual_20120726.pdf), and mediation of short-term visitation to experienced travel clinics registered in the JSTH to facilitate learning above information and aftercare services. JSTH accepted requests for visitation to travel clinics from 39 medical institutions between 2011 and 2018. By 2018, 26 (66.7%) of the 39 medical institutions had opened travel clinics within two years and the 25 travel clinics had registered in the JSTH and one was a campus-limited clinic, while most of the remaining institutions are still in preparation stages. The number of travel clinics registered in the JSTH has increased from 45 in 2011 to 108 in 2018. Twenty-five travel clinics registered in the JSTH between 2011 and 2018 were eventually receiving support from JSTH. Our data indicates travel clinics in Japan have gradually increased and establishment areas are expanding after the beginning of support project for travel clinics by JSTH.

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Japanese have freely traveled abroad since 1964. That is the point at which the number of Japanese travelers to foreign countries dramatically increased to reach approximately 17 million over the past 20 years. In addition, the number of foreign travelers who

visit Japan has increased remarkably in recent years and reached more than 28 million in 2017. Since the Tokyo Olympic will be held in 2020, it is estimated that foreign travelers who visit Japan will continue to increase. On the other hand, travels by long-term residents, both with and without accompanying family members, to developing countries have increased and some travelers intend to go into the wilderness rather than to popular tourist spot, which has led to an increased risk for travelers from various infectious diseases [1]. Travel destinations are potentially associated with infectious diseases endemic to a particular area [2]. In particular, emerging infectious diseases such as ebola virus infection and Middle East respiratory syndrome have recently gained epidemic

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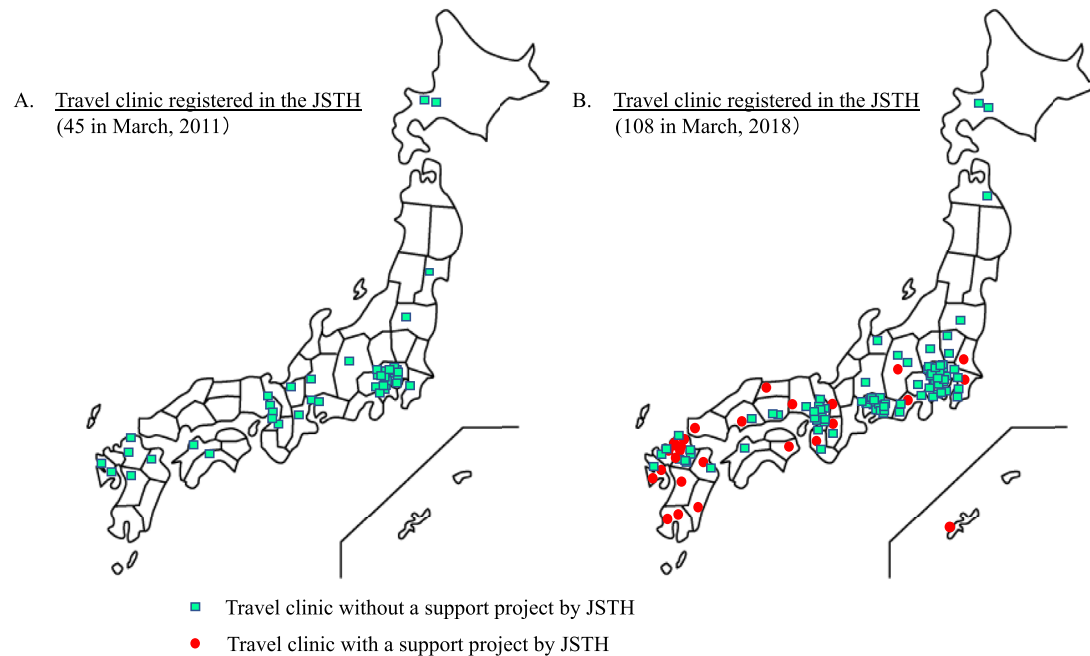


Fig. 1. Comparison of the number of travel clinics registered in the JSTH before and after the support project by Japanese society of travel and health. The number of travel clinics registered in the JSTH had increased from 45 in March 2011 (A) to 108 in March 2018 (B). Although travel clinics continue to exist mainly in metropolitan areas in A, the number in local cities has now almost drawn even in B.

status in the world, which imparts importance to medical systems for imported infections.

Travel clinics are well-known in western countries where medical consultations, vaccinations, and prescriptions are performed [3]. However, these are not yet popular in Japan. As of April 2018, the number of travel clinics in Japan registered in the International society of travel medicine website (http://istmsite.membershipsoftware.org/AF_CstmClinicDirectory.asp) was only 40, whereas that in United States is 695. Travel medicine is yet to be sufficiently recognized in Japan yet. Most Japanese travelers to foreign countries miss information concerning the infectious diseases that are endemic to their destinations and hesitate to receive the recommended vaccines or prophylactic measures for conditions such as malaria. Although a variety of travel medicine is performed in the Asia-Pacific region, a gap exists in the practice of travel medicine among certain countries [4]. In 2005, the Japanese society of travel and health (JSTH) started educational undertakings, which led to certificate exams in 2007, and the compilation of vaccination guideline for travelers to facilitate their receipt of suitable vaccines before their travel in 2010. However, travel clinics in local cities continue to be rare, and many travelers have barriers to travel clinic visitation. In 2011, JSTH started a support project for travel clinics to increase their number throughout the country. Steps taken included the release of a manual covering education, training, equipment, details of medical treatment, sources of information for travel clinic opening on the JSTH website (http://jstah.umin.jp/20TravelClinicSupport/manual_20120726.pdf), and mediation of short-term visitation to experienced travel clinics registered in the JSTH to facilitate learning above information and aftercare services. The JSTH accepted requests for visitation to travel clinics from 39 medical institutions between 2011 and 2018. By the start of 2018, 26 (66.7%) of the 39

medical institutions had opened travel clinics within two years and the 25 of those travel clinics registered in the JSTH with another being a campus limited clinic. Most of the remaining institutions are still in preparation stages. The JSTH intends to use the support project to build a network among travel clinics in Japan. The number of travel clinics registered in the JSTH increased from 45 in March 2011 to 108 in March 2018 (Fig. 1). Twenty-five travel clinics registered in the JSTH between 2011 and 2018 were eventually receiving support from JSTH. Although travel clinics mainly existed in metropolitan areas in 2011, by 2018 the number in local cities had almost drawn even. In fact, travel clinics un-registered in the JSTH exist in Japan, although such information is limited, and that is a limitation of this report. Our data indicates the number of travel clinics in Japan have gradually increased and establishment areas are expanding after the beginning of support project for travel clinics by JSTH.

Declaration of interests

The authors state they have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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