

Original text: 「重症新型コロナウイルス感染症による医療の逼迫について」

Medical institutions accepting critically ill patients with the novel coronavirus infection

Hironori Miyamoto, *Director, Kyoto University Hospital*

Atsushi Sueyoshi, *Director of Uji Tokushukai Hospital*

Hitoshi Yaku, *Director, University Hospital, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine*

Eito Ikeda, *Director, Kyoto First Red Cross Hospital*

Hiroshi Kobayashi, *Director of Kyoto Second Red Cross Hospital*

Kaoru Koike, *Director, Kyoto Medical Center*

Keishi Kuroda, *Director, Kyoto City Hospital*

Yoshihiro Wakazono, *Director, Kyoto Katsura Hospital*

Jun Takeda, *Director, Takeda Hospital*

Tsuneyo Mimori, *Director, Takeda General Hospital*

Kiyoshi Ninomiya, *Director, Otowa Hospital*

Shinji Ono, *Director, Mitsubishi Kyoto Hospital*

Toshitaka Takagi, *Director, Kyoto Okamoto Memorial Hospital*

Haruki Bushi, *Director, Maizuru Kyosai Hospital*

Due to the rapid development of the third wave of the novel coronavirus infection, medical care for problems other than coronavirus has been severely affected. All medical institutions in the Kyoto prefecture are already experiencing difficulties in accepting emergency patients, and scheduled hospitalizations and surgeries have had to be postponed. In light of this situation, all hospitals that have been providing inpatient care for critically ill patients with the coronavirus infection in the Kyoto prefecture have united to issue the following warning message regarding a potential collapse of medical care.

Message from medical institutions receiving critically ill patients with novel coronavirus infection

1. The number of patients with severe cases of the coronavirus infection is rapidly increasing, and hospitals that have been treating severe cases in the Kyoto prefecture are becoming unable to accept them. **If the infection continues to spread and the number of critically ill coronavirus patients reaches just 30 across the whole Kyoto Prefecture (15 in Kyoto City), the situation will become so critical that normal medical services for diseases such as cancer, stroke, heart disease, as well as emergency medical services, will almost stop.**

2. In order to prevent the collapse of medical care and to save the lives of patients with diseases other than coronavirus, it is necessary to decrease the number of new coronavirus cases by reducing the opportunities for people to travel and come into contact with asymptomatic positive patients. **Regardless of the government's "Go-To" policy, we ask the public to refrain from going out unnecessarily, or from dining or drinking with large numbers of people, until the spread of the infection stops.**

3. At present, the number of new positive cases per day (weekly average) has been in the 50s in the Kyoto prefecture, and the prefecture's warning level is now at "special alert". If the number of new positive cases per day were to drop to around 20, the warning level would revert to "alert level" (one level lower than "special alert"), and medical institutions would be able to manage the influx of coronavirus patients while the economy continues running. Thank you for your cooperation.

Detailed Description

Since the outbreak of the first wave, the division of work between medical institutions has been going well in the Kyoto prefecture. The Medical Association has been responsible for the initial diagnosis of patients and the PCR testing center, while the medical institutions receiving patients with mild to moderate illness, as well as the 13 hospitals capable of performing cardiovascular surgery using artificial heart and lungs (hereinafter referred to as "medical institutions receiving patients with severe illness"), have been working together well to combat the coronavirus.

In the Kyoto prefecture, these 13 selected medical institutions have accepted ***all critically ill patients with novel coronavirus infection in the Kyoto prefecture since the first wave. It is almost impossible for other medical institutions to accept severely ill patients.*** Among these 13 hospitals,

there are some which have difficulty accepting severe cases from other hospitals, while managing to deal with the severe cases of their own hospitalized patients.

The number of severe cases of novel coronavirus infection is increasing, and some hospitals which have been accepting severe cases in Kyoto prefecture are no longer to do so. In order for these medical institutions to accept more critically ill patients than at present, it is necessary to restrict other emergency medical care for stroke, heart disease, cancer treatment, transplants, and advanced surgeries requiring intensive care.

According to an analysis of the number of patients with severe stroke and circulatory diseases in January last year at six medical institutions (ones which are currently accepting the majority of severely ill patients requiring ventilators or ECMO in the Kyoto prefecture), a total of 120 patients were admitted and treated at those hospitals on average each day. If the infection continues to spread and the number of patients with severe cases of coronavirus infection reaches about 30 in Kyoto Prefecture (15 in Kyoto City), about 60 patients per day with severe stroke and circulatory disease will be unable to receive treatment. With the onset of the winter season, the number of strokes and cardiovascular diseases will increase, and the lives that could have been saved last year may be lost. This critical situation would constitute a collapse of the medical system in the Kyoto prefecture.

It has already been pointed out by other prefectures and the Japan Medical Association that ***the number of beds announced as secured differs from the number of beds that can actually be operated.*** Even if hospital beds and medical equipment are available, the number of nurses and medical technicians available to handle the patients cannot be increased or trained in such a short term. The same is true in the Kyoto prefecture, where there is a gap between the published number of critical care beds and the real situation of the 13 hospitals receiving critical care patients. There is a practical limit to the number of critical care beds that can be made available, regardless of how strongly the government requests them or how much other medical services are curtailed.

If the number of occupied critical care beds becomes too large, it will become impossible to transfer patients who have been admitted to a medical institution that receives patients with mild illnesses to one that receives patients with severe illnesses. As a result, not only the medical institutions that receive patients with severe diseases but also those that receive patients with mild to moderate diseases will become dysfunctional, ***leading to the collapse of not only coronary care but also medical care as a whole.***

Due to the introduction of ECMO for severe cases of novel coronavirus infection admitted as

emergencies, there has already been cases in which such patients on the waiting list for emergency surgery were unable to undergo surgery and were transferred to other hospitals. ***Medical care is already under pressure, and the situation is becoming critical. Patients with problems other than coronavirus infections may lose the opportunity to receive treatment.***

At present, infections caused by eating and drinking in restaurants and bars are on the rise, and new clusters are occurring in the Kyoto prefecture, all while the infection is spreading nationwide due to seasonal factors. There has also been an increase in the number of cases among university students, who have been relatively unaffected until now. If the situation continues as is, the infection will continue to spread throughout Kyoto prefecture and that the number of seriously ill patients will continue to increase. The most important thing we can do right now to support medical institutions and healthcare workers is to prevent the number of infected people from increasing. In order to prevent the collapse of medical care and to save the lives of patients with diseases other than coronavirus, the number of newly infected patients must be controlled. While in other prefectures where people are being asked to refrain from certain activities, Kyoto prefecture still has areas that are crowded with people. ***Regardless of the government's "Go-To" policy, we would like to ask the public to refrain from going out unnecessarily or from drinking or dining with large numbers of people until the spread of the infection is under control.***

We strongly request the government to take measures to reduce the number of infected people by reducing the opportunities for people to move around and come into contact with asymptomatic people, and to issue strong warnings to refraining from certain activities.