

International Perspectives

Fukushi (Social Welfare) Recreation in Japan

Hiroko Murray
Yoshifumi Tajima
Tadaaki Wakui
Takashi Wakano
Shinichi Nagata

Abstract

Fukushi recreation is defined as recreation services that are provided in the context of *fukushi* (social welfare) services. The *fukushi* recreation worker certification emerged during 1970s and became the current *fukushi* recreation worker certification in 1990 through collaboration with the Japanese Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS) returnees. Students enroll in the *fukushi* recreation worker training through correspondence education or through approved higher education institutions. It is possible to earn the certification within a year. Importantly, the number of *fukushi* recreation workers reached 10,224 in 2005; however, it has been declining significantly since. Recently, the Japanese government began supporting community-based programs through long-term care insurance. Increased funding is available for the community-based programs such as recreational activities; no other health care professions are currently trained to facilitate recreational activities.

Keywords

Curriculum, elderly care, fukushi recreation, Japan, long-term care insurance

Hiroko Murray is a director of Social Welfare Corporation Kohitujikai.

Yoshifumi Tajima is a professor at Kobe University of Welfare.

Tadaaki Wakui is a professor in the Faculty of Health and Well-being at Kansai University.

Takashi Wakano is a program director of Solaputi Kids' Camp.

Shinichi Nagata is an assistant professor in the School of Health Science and Wellness at Northwest Missouri State University.

Please send correspondence to Hiroko Murray, hirokomurray@yahoo.co.jp

Fukushi recreation is emblematic of Japanese therapeutic recreation (TR) in the care of older adults (Nishino et al., 2007). Since 2005, Japan has had the world's highest ratio of older adults. The current ratio of older adults (27.7% in 2018: Cabinet Office, 2018) is projected to rise to 31.6% by 2030 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2012) and the number of long-term care facilities has been increasing (Statistics Japan, 2017). These long-term care services are funded by Long-Term Care Insurance System¹. However, the number of certified *fukushi* recreation workers has declined nearly by half since 2007.

Definition of *Fukushi* Recreation and the Meaning of Recreation among Japanese Elderly

Fukushi recreation is defined as recreation services that are provided in the context of *fukushi* (social welfare) services (National Recreation Association in Japan, 2017). *Fukushi* is best defined as interventions that are provided to compensate deficits so that all the citizens enjoy healthy and cultured living. Therefore, *fukushi* services include services to accomplish basic needs such as bathing, toileting, and feeding, as well as recreation services that fulfill the needs of overall well-being.

The term “recreation” in *fukushi* recreation is a word of foreign origin. Although there are original Japanese words that describe play (*asobi*), hobbies (*syumi*), and entertainment (*tanoshimi*), no equivalent word exists to describe “recreation” in the Japanese language. Japanese people began using the word “recreation” around 1900 to describe American culture such as dances, songs, and games that were quickly spreading in Japan (Ikeda et al., 1989). After World War II, the National Recreation Association in Japan (NRAJ) was established in 1947 and promoted “recreation” for Japanese people's health, education, and building a society rich in culture. Currently, the Japanese general population understands the word “recreation” as dances, songs, and games that are not necessarily important or meaningful to the individuals, and some Japanese older adults characterize recreation as mere child's play or just killing time. To shift the meaning of “recreation” from mere activity to sources of satisfaction, enjoyment, self-fulfillment and happiness, NRAJ redefined “recreation” as activities to enrich people's mind through enjoyment in their 2017 *fukushi* recreation textbook.

History of *Fukushi* Recreation

The origin of *fukushi* recreation emerged around the time of the 1973 Oil Crisis. The population began ageing rapidly and there was a significant drop of birth rates in Japan due to industrialization and weakened economy. At the same time, the needs of recreation for older adults in nursing homes began to increase. In response to this trend, the NRAJ launched recreation programs for older adults (NRAJ, 1974). The root of *fukushi* recreation certification specifically was the elderly recreation worker

¹The Long-Term Care Insurance System was started in 2000, and there were 3,704,000 people who received a certificate of eligibility for the long-term care and support by 2003. This system is managed and operated by local municipalities. If an individual is certified by the long-term care certification committee, he/she becomes eligible for long-term care services such as home care services, community-oriented services, or in-facility services. Those services are decided based on the level of care needed and individual needs. Users themselves may choose services and service providers. The number of persons certified with care needs and support needs has increased from 2.18 million in 2000 to 6.08 million in 2015 (Health and Welfare Bureau for Elderly, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2016).

certification that was established in 1974, which was based on existing recreation instructor certifications that were developed between 1940s and 1960s. The training's key competencies were facilitation techniques of group recreation such as games, songs, and dance as well as modification skills according to interests and preferences of older adults.

The elderly recreation worker certification was further developed and converted to the *fukushi* recreation worker certification when the concept and knowledge of TR was brought to the field from North America. NRAJ had been improving its training programs through research projects and using an *Introduction to Therapeutic Recreation* book written by O'Morrow (translated by Imai, 1981). According to a report entitled *50 years of the Recreation Movement* (NRAJ, 1998), O'Morrow's book made a strong impact on the seminars that NRAJ was offering at the time. The book helped the seminar organizers understand the foundational and theoretical models of TR. NRAJ collaborated with Japanese Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS) returnees who were trained in the United States to make significant improvements in the elderly recreation worker curriculum. These efforts became the foundation of NRAJ's current *fukushi* recreation worker training program. In 1989, the *fukushi* recreation subsection was established at the National Recreation Research Conference (hosted by NRAJ). In 1994, *fukushi* recreation worker was launched as an official certification of NRAJ.

Figure 1 shows that the number of certified *fukushi* recreation workers grew steadily from 1994. The growth was attributed to the increased need of recreation services in elderly care, and the certified *fukushi* recreation worker program was integrated into the certified care worker training program. In order to maintain the competence of certified *fukushi* recreation workers, the CTRS returnees and their colleagues updated *fukushi* recreation textbooks with the current research in the field of *fukushi* recreation. In addition, continuing education opportunities had been provided by the National *Fukushi* Recreation Network. The number of certificants reached 10,224 in 2005 but has been in constant decline since.

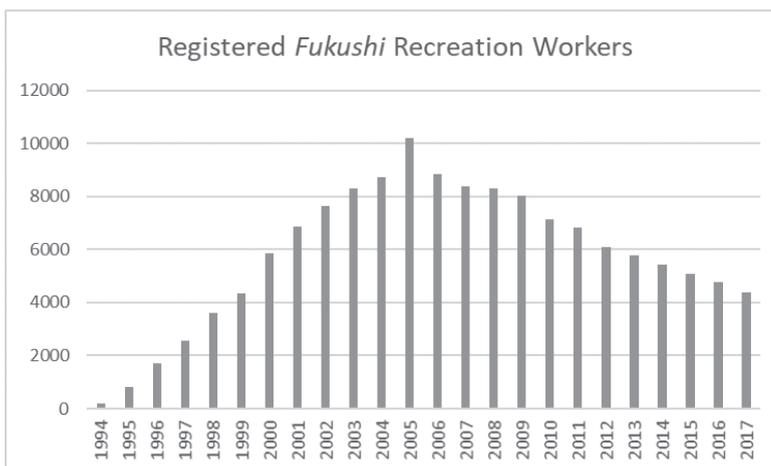


Figure 1. The 1994-2017 number of registered *fukushi* recreation workers

The Practice and Curriculum of *Fukushi* Recreation

Fukushi recreation is typically practiced as a part of the duty of care workers. These care workers are hired to provide bathing, toileting, and feeding as their primary responsibilities. *Fukushi* recreation worker certification is regarded as a training that helps recreation facilitation, yet is not required to find employment as a care worker. Similarly, allied health professionals, such as nurses, social workers, physical therapists, and occupational therapists seek *fukushi* recreation worker certification as a voluntary certification to enhance their practice.

The overview of *fukushi* recreation worker certification training curriculum is shown in Table 1. According to a *fukushi* recreation worker certification brochure published by the NRAJ in 2018, trainees will develop four competences to: (a) facilitate programs that are enjoyable and motivating; (b) plan and implement attractive events; (c) adapt programs according to the participants; and (d) create enjoyable, pleasurable, and variety of recreation support plans that are appropriate for clients. *Fukushi* recreation workers are able to support each person's *ikigai* (literally, "a reason for being" or what makes life worthwhile) through individualized activity planning, one-on-one communication, and individually modified activities. Students enroll in the required courses through correspondence education or through approved higher education institutions. It is possible to earn the certification within a year.

Future Directions

Due to increasing patients with chronic illnesses and to a shrinking health care budget, the Japanese government has been promoting a switch from institutional care to home care. The government set a goal to establish a community-based comprehensive care system by 2025, when baby boomers reach the age of 75 or above, so that they may remain living in their community. This is an untapped resource that may promote *fukushi* recreation. Currently, allied health professionals such as physical or occupational therapists who provide recreation-like activities as rehabilitation are reimbursed through the Long-Term Care Insurance program. *Fukushi* recreation is not included as a reimbursable service in the Long-Term Care Insurance System. The Japanese government has not recognized enjoyment and self-fulfillment as an important construct that is associated with health, quality of life and well-being.

If the Japanese government aims to improve quality of life of older adults, it should consider leisure education and recreation participation to be included in nursing care compensation. The uniqueness of recreation is that its purpose is to experience enjoyment, and as Sessoms (1982) stated the mission and uniqueness of therapeutic recreation is to "...provide opportunities and environments for people to enjoy, to experience the recreation moment... no one else is given that responsibility" (p. 23). In Japan, *Fukushi* recreation workers are the only profession that provide such an opportunity.

In order to make *fukushi* recreation a reimbursable service, improved competence of *fukushi* recreation workers is necessary. The curriculum of *fukushi* recreation workers must be refined to ensure positive and measurable outcomes (Yang & Kim, 2017). *Fukushi* recreation workers need to be experts of enjoyment. We need to know how people experience excitement, and how people engage in their leisure interests. We need to know how to motivate people so that they might be able to do things which lead them to hope. Finally, we need to be practical, theoretical, and scientific with regard to recreation and leisure.

Table 1*Fukushi Recreation Worker Certification Training Curriculum (revised in 2013)*

<p>Foundational Knowledge and Support Skills in Recreation (51 hours)</p> <p>Theories in recreation (9 hours) Activity training courses (27 hours) Practicum courses (15 hours)</p>
<p>Foundational Knowledge and Support Skills in Social Welfare and Related Fields (50 hours)</p> <p>Understanding of care recipients</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advanced course on social welfare b. Support skills in social welfare <p>Understanding of the society and social welfare services</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduction to social welfare b. Health Science <p>Practical supporting skills in social welfare and medicine</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Foundational knowledge on rehabilitation b. Foundation of care work skills c. Counseling d. Methods in childcare e. First aid (elective: two courses from above)
<p>Specialized Knowledge and Support Skills in Fukushi Recreation (70 hours)</p> <p>Understanding of Fukushi Recreation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Understanding of support through Fukushi Recreation b. Support methods in Fukushi Recreation and its theoretical background <p>Planning in Fukushi Recreation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Integrated planning in Fukushi Recreation, using recreation services b. Program planning to support individual through group, and evaluation of support <p>Intervention skills in Fukushi Recreation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Communication skills to build trust, and intervention skills I b. Intervention skills II, III, and selecting and modifying recreational activities
<p>Fukushi Recreation Practicum (30 hours) (Service at a site: 3 days)</p>

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