Responding to the increase of internationals in Japan, with the Tokyo Olympics just 5 years away
Healthcare think tank JIGH launches mediPhone, a telephone service for healthcare support for internationals in Japan

Hospital searches, healthcare information and medical interpreting in foreign languages provided through a single phone call

The Japan Institute for Global Health (JIGH), a think tank that focuses on issues in global health and healthcare (located in Minato-ku, Tokyo, President: Dr. Kenji Shibuya), is expanding their telephone medical interpreting service that they have been providing to medical institutes within Japan, mediPhone for Hospitals, to mediPhone, a telephone service for healthcare support for individual international residents and tourists.

mediPhone’s website：http://en.mediphone.jp/

By signing up to this new mediPhone service through its website, users will be able to freely access English operators who will provide guidance on medical institutions and healthcare systems via phone, as well as information related to health and medical care through the web. They will also be able to call English-Japanese medical interpreters on-demand if they register their credit card information online (fee-based service). JIGH is planning to expand this service September to include Chinese in addition to a translating service for English and Chinese users who fill out medical questionnaires online for Japanese hospitals.

mediPhone envisions a world where there is equal access to healthcare for all, and strives to find solutions in healthcare services to eliminate all economic, social and physical barriers that exist between healthcare and people.

● Overview of our mediPhone service

【Functions】Hospital searches, healthcare information and medical interpreting in foreign languages provided via phone, healthcare information provided via internet
【Available languages】English (will expand to include Chinese in the near future)
【Business hours】Weekdays 10:00-13:00, 14:00-17:00
【Charges】Hospital searches, healthcare information provided online and via the phone: Free
Medical interpreting：360yen/minute, General interpreting (For more general purposes such as at a reception）：180yen/minute
【Goals for the first year】：10,000 members, 15 million yen in sales

mediPhone for Hospitals: A telephone based medical interpreting service that is operated by JIGH since 2014. Medical institutes can call a number to easily connect to medical interpreters, who will then interpret conversations between the doctor and patient. mediPhone for Hospitals has been introduced to over 80 medical institutes as of July, 2015. It currently provides language support in 7 languages; English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Spanish and Hindi.

【For more information】Please contact Kinoe Tomohisa, Director of Communications at JIGH Tel: 03-6426-5451 / info@mediphone.jp
Why medical interpreting is necessary:

✓ The increase in internationals within Japan

The number of international immigrants in the country has increased by 0.2 million within the past 10 years (since the end of 2004) to a total of 2.1 million\(^1\). The number of international tourists has also increased by 7 million since 2004, to reach a total of approximately 13.4 million\(^2\). The government intends to increase this number to 20 million by 2020, and the number of tourists is expected to steadily increase towards the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

\( \ast 1 \): Data from December 2014 by the Ministry of Justice

\( \ast 2 \): Data from 2014 by the Japan National Tourist Organization

✓ Regional discrepancies due to the lack of a national medical interpreting system

The field of medical interpreting has been improving with the aid of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare since 2014. However, although there are regional NPOs and NGOs that are partaking in raising, educating and dispatching interpreting specialists, there is a call for a more national involvement in order to lessen regional discrepancies in the availability of medical interpreters.

Interview respondent

Dr. Eiji Kusumi

Supervisor for mediPhone and President of the medical cooperation Navitas Clinic. Started the Navitas Clinic Tachikawa at Tachikawa station (JR East) in 2008. The Navitas Clinic is conveniently located in the station building, and provides primary emergency care until 9pm in the internal medicine, pediatrics and dermatology departments. The clinic expanded to Kawasaki station and Higashi-Nakano station in 2012. Dr. Kusumi catches and dispatches information regarding healthcare in the forefront of the field, and has appeared in television shows by the Tokyo Broadcasting System in addition to being featured by various magazines and newspapers. He is also the director of the Medical Governance Society, a certified physician and hematologist, has a certificate in Travel Health, and is a member of the International Society of Travel Medicine.

About JIGH

JIGH is a think tank that focuses on issues in global health and healthcare policy. It promotes international cooperation for healthcare projects around the world as well as innovations within the field of global healthcare. JIGH also supports project advocacy efforts, including community contributions by NGOs/NPOs, international organizations and foundations.

Contact Information

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