

Time zone of hospitalization of children under 6 years of age in Japan

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Background and Aims

Many children in Japan visit medical facilities at night and during holidays. However, there is no sufficient information on the time zone of children's hospitalization. In this analysis, I tried to clarify the proportion of the out-of-hours hospitalization of infants and toddlers.

Medical provision system in Japan

Universal health care by Japanese social insurance has been realized in Japan's medical care since 1961.

The medical system in Japan is characterized by

1. The public national health insurance system (Universal coverage, Compulsory entry)
2. Free access (NO GATE-KEEPER).

In Japan, almost of all medical care is provided under the social insurance system, and 99% of patients were treated under the insurance (2014 Patient Survey). There is **NO GATE-KEEPER**, and Japanese citizen can visit freely hospitals including tertiary medical centers.

At the consultation of children under the age of 6 years, guardians must pay 20% of medical fees out-of-pocket. However, the majority of local governments subsidize their own burdens, and almost of all guardians of sick children do not have to pay at a counter of medical office.

Method

Data from Statistics of Medical Care Activities in Public Health Insurance, 2016 published by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare were used. This statistics describes all the medical care activities performed in June, 2016 under the Japanese social insurance system

Extra fees for each time zone are charged at the first consultation of children under 6 years old. I calculated the number of reimbursement for extra fees in and out of medical hours for the children under 6 years old who were hospitalized at the **FIRST CONSULTATION**.

The number of reimbursement at **FOLLOW-UP** consultation was **NOT** analyzed, because **NO EXTRA MEDICAL FEES are charged** at the FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATION in MEDICAL HOURS and the number of infants and toddlers who were hospitalized at the FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATION was NOT able to be calculated from the statistics of reimbursement.

Table 1. Extra fees for each time zone at consultation of children under 6 years of age in Japan (2016)

Consultation	Medical Hours	Out of Medical Hours		
		Weekday (6AM-8AM; 6PM-10PM)	Weekend (excluding 10PM-6AM)	Late at night (10PM-6AM) of Weekday and Weekend
First	YES (750YEN: 5.8 Euro)	YES (2000-3450YEN : 15.4-26.5 Euro)	YES (3650YEN: 28.1 Euro)	YES (6950YEN: 53.4 Euro)
Follow-up	NO	YES	YES	YES

- 1 Euro = 130.11 Yen

Results

In June 2016, 30,045 infants and toddlers in Japan were hospitalized at the first consultation. 18,282 (60.8%) admitted to a hospital in medical hours. On the other hand, the remaining children (11,763 children, 39.2%) were hospitalized **OUT OF HOURS**, and 2,983 (9.9%) were **LATE AT NIGHT** (from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.)

Table 2. The number of reimbursement for outpatient fee in and out of medical hours for the children under 6 years of age who were hospitalized at the FIRST VISIT (in June, 2016)

Time zone	Number of Reimbursement
In Medical Hours	18,282 (60.8%)
Out of Medical Hours	11,763 (39.2%)
Weekday	5,259 (17.6%)
Weekend	3,521 (11.7%)
Late at Night (10PM-6AM) of Weekday and Weekend	2,983 (9.9%)
Total	30,045 (100%)

Conclusion

Approximately 40% of hospitalization of children under 6 years old at the time of first visit was OUT OF MEDICAL HOURS.

Limitation

1. The number of hospitalization at the time of follow-up consultation was NOT analyzed, because the number of patients who hospitalized in the medical hours was unknown
2. Medical practices in only one month (June) of a year (2016) was analyzed.
3. The influence of infectious diseases is unknown.