

Impressions and Turning points of Japanese public health dietitians: a web-based cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT: *Background/Purpose:* The purpose of this study was to clarify the impressions and turning points (hereinafter referred to as “impressions”) of each organization where public health dietitians work in Japan. *Method:* In 2021, we conducted a complete Web-survey of Japanese public health dietitians working in prefectures, special wards and cities with public health centers, and municipalities. The impressions and turning points of the participants were classified based on the basic guidelines for improving health promotion and nutrition and dietary habits by public health dietitians in the community. *Results:* The sample of responses included 425, 323, and 914 public health dietitians working in prefectures, special wards and cities with public health centers, and municipalities, respectively. The most impressionable factors for prefectural dietitians were collaborative work, work experience other than health and sanitation departments, health crisis management, self-operated and planned projects, work at the headquarter, and research activities. Public health dietitians in special wards and cities with public health centers were most impressed by work experience other than health and sanitation departments, resident support, health guidance, collaborative work, self-planned and managed projects, and maternal and child health. Municipal public health dietitians were most impressed by maternal and child health, adult health, welfare for older adults, collaborative work, changing jobs to administrative positions, and general interpersonal work. *Conclusion:* We found regardless of the organization where Japanese public health dietitians work meaningful experiences were similar. Support of these experiences may improve self-efficacy of public health dietitians.

Key Words: public health dietitians, self-efficacy, impression, turning point, duty, Japan

INTRODUCTION

Public health nutrition is the art and science of promoting population health status via sustainable improvements in the food and nutrition system. Based on public health principles, it is a set of comprehensive and collaborative activities, ecological in perspective, and intersectoral in scope; it includes environmental, educational, economic, technical, and legislative measures (1). For example, public health dietitians implement salt reduction in communities through assessing community, informing to people, and collaboration with stakeholders (2). Dietitians are specialists responsible for public health nutrition activities. The number of public health dietitians working at public health centers and health centers is smaller than that of public health nurses in Japan (3). To promote businesses with a small number of people, increasing self-efficacy is essential (4).

Self-efficacy, as proposed by Bandura, is an individual’s belief in how well they can perform the actions required to produce a certain result (4). Individuals with high self-efficacy exhibit behavioral characteristics such as willingness to make a great deal of effort, willingness to tackle challenges, and a high

degree of expectation for eventual success (4).

Extant literature has reported that professionalism and self-efficacy are associated with length of service, personal development, skill improvement, meaningful clinical experience, and participation in social and external activities (5). The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare presents the work of public health dietitians in prefectures, special wards and cities with health centers, and municipalities (6). Little is known about what working activities are meaningful experiences for public health dietitians.

The duties of public health dietitians working in prefectures, special wards and cities with public health centers, and municipalities vary (6). Therefore, this study aims to clarify public health dietitians’ meaningful experiences, through investigating the impressions and turning points in each type of organization where public health dietitians work. The results of this study may help improve the work of public health dietitians.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Participants

We conducted a cross-sectional survey among dietitians working in prefectures, special wards and cities with public health centers, and municipalities. The inclusion criteria for the study participants were:

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