

Japan's first online media seminar on antimicrobial resistance

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Abstract: According to the National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, published in 2016, various measures have been implemented to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Japan. Subsequently, promoting public education is important, as the Japanese public does not have sufficient knowledge about antimicrobials and AMR. The AMR Clinical Reference Center (AMRCRC) of the National Center for Global Health and Medicine conducts seminars for the media once a year as part of information and education services. In 2020, the AMRCRC conducted the first online seminar since it was unable to conduct face-to-face seminars due to the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. An online seminar was considered effective in promoting education and awareness through the media. Twenty-four media representatives (from 19 companies) participated in the online seminar. Media articles related to the activities of AMRCRC were similar to those of the previous years despite the impact of COVID-19.

Keywords: antimicrobial resistance, online seminar, awareness, media coverage

Combating antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global challenge that is being tackled with the help of the Global Action Plan on AMR (2015) (1). In Japan, various measures are being implemented in accordance with the National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR) (2016) (2). In both the action plans, the emphasis is on promoting public education. The first agenda (Strategy 1.1) in NAP-AMR is to promote awareness and education of AMR among the public, as the Japanese people have insufficient knowledge about antimicrobials, AMR, and infectious diseases in general (3). Although antimicrobial agents are prescription drugs in Japan, many physicians believe that misconceptions among the general public is one of the barriers to the proper use of antimicrobials (4). Patients may ask for prescriptions for antimicrobials even when they are not needed or may interrupt the use of prescribed antimicrobials to take them later at their own discretion.

The AMR Clinical Reference Center (AMRCRC) of the National Center for Global Health and Medicine was established in 2017 as a commissioned project of Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. The AMRCRC conducts information and education services along with clinical epidemiology services. Such educational and awareness-raising campaigns are aimed at both healthcare professionals and the general public. For the public, we are working on circulating necessary

information through our website and by conducting events. Seminars for the media, however, are held in the fall along with press releases with the expectation that it will be reported in November, the month for campaigning on AMR.

In 2020, it was impossible to conduct face-to-face seminars due to the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. However, since we were concerned that media coverage would decrease, we decided to proactively provide information to the media. Therefore, we conducted the first online seminar on October 6. The program consisted of a 20-minute presentation each by the director of the AMRCRC and the chiefs of the three divisions: Information and Education Division, Pharmacoepidemiology Division and Clinical Epidemiology Division.

Twenty-four media representatives (from 19 companies) participated in the seminars. The participants were mainly journalists from the medical media and medical beats of mass media and news services. The number of participants was the highest ever. Dr. Yoshiaki Gu, the chief of the Information and Education Division explained the results of an awareness survey conducted on the public in August 2020. Dr. Yoshiki Kusama, the chief of the Pharmacoepidemiology Division focused on the results of the latest survey on antimicrobial usage. Dr. Nobuaki Matsunaga, the chief of the Clinical Epidemiology Division introduced websites that compile

Table 1. Summary of media seminars by AMRCRC

Items	2017	2018	2019	2020
Date of Media Seminar	8 November (face to face)	30 October (face to face)	24 September (face to face)	6 October (Online)
Number of companies (persons) participated	9 (11)	15 (21)	16 (22)	19 (24)
Number of media reports related to AMRCRC in November				
TV programs	2	4	2	0
Newspapers and Magazines	14	20	32	24
Web articles	148	79	46	70
Total	164	103	80	94

data from hospitals and all over Japan and the process of utilizing them. Finally, Dr. Norio Ohmagari, the Director of the AMRCRC explained the progress made since the NAP-AMR was launched as well as future challenges. This was followed by an enthusiastic interaction session lasting over 30 minutes.

A total of 94 media reports related to the activities of AMRCRC were published from November 1 to 30, including 24 newspaper and magazine reports and 70 web articles (Table 1). Although no television coverage has been reported, the media coverage was no less than the previous years.

The media plays an important role in disseminating appropriate information to the public. Despite the widespread use of social networking services (SNS), mass media still has a great impact. The AMRCRC is continuously working to provide accurate information about AMR to the public through media. Since the public receives abundant information from the media, awareness campaigns through the media can significantly increase their knowledge (5). The media also has a critical influence on SNS (6). However, the media should ensure dispersion of scientifically accurate information to avoid misinformation (7).

Media seminars by AMRCRC provide a good opportunity to present data on AMR that can be used as media coverages and deepen understanding through interaction session. It is also an excellent opportunity for experts to understand the importance of explaining things in a more lucid manner through media interaction. While COVID-19 coverage dominated in 2020, media coverage of the activities of AMRCRC was about the same as in the previous years. It was thought that conducting media seminars online would have the same effect as face-to-face seminars. Online seminars for media can be used in the future to educate and raise awareness about AMR.

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