

The state of foreigners living in Japan as gauged by people undergoing a comprehensive health checkup (Ningen Dock)

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Abstract: Benefiting from the Japanese Government's welcoming of foreign visitors, our facility was able to accept and respond to large number of foreign tourists (1,493) to undergo a comprehensive health checkup (Ningen Dock) in 2019. However, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) completely precluded the acceptance of tourists for two years starting in from 2020. In August 2020, our hospital policy was changed to actively accept foreign residents in Japan for comprehensive health checkups. In this article, we analyzed the foreign residents who use our facility in detail and we investigated the characteristics of foreign residents from the viewpoint of a comprehensive health checkup.

Keywords: Ningen Dock, foreign residents, female consultation rate

The number of foreigners residing in Japan was 2,760,635 (1) at the end of 2021, and it has decreased every year since 2019. Dividing the number of foreign residents by the current latest total population of Japan (2) gives approximately 2.20%. Foreign residents accounted for 2.32% of the population in Japan in 2019 but gradually decreased to 2.29% in 2020 and 2.20% in 2021. This suggests that the number of foreign residents is decreasing. In 2019, the number of foreign residents reached its peak, and the tourism industry was at its peak. However, the COVID-19 pandemic that started in the beginning of 2020 has presumably affected the number of foreign residents.

Looking at the number of foreign residents by nationality, most are Chinese, but that proportion is lower than it was in 2017. The number of Vietnamese living in Japan is on the rise, surpassing Koreans in 2020 and accounting for the second largest proportion after Chinese.

Benefiting from the Japanese Government's welcoming of foreign visitors, the authors' facility was able to accept and handle a large number of foreign tourists (1,493) undergoing a comprehensive health checkup (Ningen Dock) in 2019 (3). However, COVID-19 completely precluded the acceptance of tourists for two years starting in 2020. Therefore, hospital policy was changed in August 2020 to actively accept foreign residents in Japan for comprehensive health checkups, and the collection of statistics on foreign residents started at the same time.

Here, the foreign residents visiting this facility have

been analyzed in detail while referring to data from the Immigration Bureau and the Statistics Bureau, and the characteristics of foreign residents have been investigated from the viewpoint of a comprehensive health checkup.

This facility accepted 159 foreign residents living in Japan from August 2020 to December 2021. The 159 foreigners included 96 Chinese, 24 Koreans, 8 Vietnamese, 6 Americans, 4 French, 3 Canadians, 2 Bangladesh, 2 British, 2 Philippines, 2 Bulgarians, 2 Germans, 1 Thai, 1 Swiss, 1 Israeli, 1 Mongolian, 1 Kenyan, 1 Brazilian, 1 Singaporean, and 1 Peruvian (Figure 1). Foreigners were from a total of 19 countries. According to statistics from the Immigration Bureau (1), the largest proportion of foreign residents in Japan is from China (26.0%), followed by Vietnam (15.7%), South Korea (14.8%), Philippines (10.0%), and Brazil (7.4%). People undergoing a comprehensive health checkup at the authors' facility were from China (60.4%), South Korea (15.1%), Vietnam (5.0%), the United States (3.8%), and France (2.5%). Although these numbers are roughly proportional to the foreign population, many of the people undergoing a comprehensive health checkup were Chinese, suggesting that Chinese are highly interested in comprehensive health checkups or their health.

Foreign residents undergoing a comprehensive health checkup consisted of 52.2% males and 47.8% females, with an average male age of 43.6 years and an average female age of 43.0 years. The male-female ratio of all the people undergoing a comprehensive health checkup (almost 96% Japanese) in 2021 was 57.7% males with

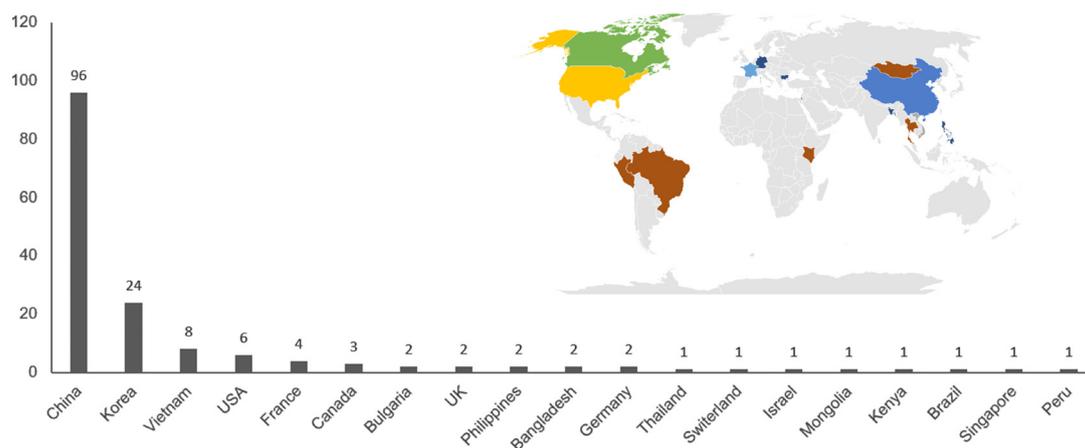


Figure 1. Number of foreigners undergoing a comprehensive health checkup (Ningen Dock) in Japan by their country of origin (Aug. 2020 – Dec. 2021).

an average age of 54.6 years and 42.3% females with an average age of 53.5 years. Compared to all of the people undergoing a comprehensive health checkup, the female consultation rate was higher for foreign residents and those residents were 10 years younger on average. This suggests that young female foreign residents are more interested in comprehensive health checkups than Japanese.

Of the total of 4,178 people undergoing a comprehensive health checkup, 159 (3.8%) were foreign residents and 51 (32.1%) needed language support. By country, 32 (33.3%) of the 96 Chinese needed language support. One (4.2%) of the 24 Koreans and 5 (62.5%) of the 8 Vietnamese needed language support. Of the 31 foreigners from 16 countries other than China, South Korea, and Vietnam, 13 (41.9%) needed English support. Koreans are less likely to need language support and are likely to be more familiar with Japanese society. That said, the number of Vietnamese residents has increased rapidly, and many of the residents needed language support during a consultation. About 30% of foreign residents appear to be fluent in Japanese and they can function in everyday life but they are worried about medical terms and need a medical interpreter.

Since medical terms in specialized fields are complicated and informed consent is important in medicine, the demand for medical interpreters is expected to increase in the future. In order for foreign residents in Japan to safely and comfortably receive medical care, many issues need to be addressed, such as training,

evaluation, and employment of medical interpreters.

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