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**Letter to the Members of the Japanese Association for Acute Medicine, Japanese Society for Emergency Medicine, and to Emergency Medical Professionals who are engaged in the COVID-19 outbreak**

Takeshi Shimazu  
Chairperson, Board of Directors  
Japanese Association for Acute Medicine

Tetsuya Sakamoto  
President, Board of Directors  
Japanese Society for Emergency Medicine

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we would like to express our gratitude and respect to the members of the Japanese Association for Acute Medicine (JAAM), Japanese Society for Emergency Medicine (JSEM) and to the emergency medical professionals for their day-and-night efforts and professionalism in that they continued clinical practice despite the risk of infection.

In the state-of-emergency declaration, the government mentioned that the Japan's medical system is facing catastrophe. The first sign of the collapse of the medical care system is the collapse of the emergency medical system that we are experiencing now. We have received concerns about the critical situation in clinical practice from the JAAM and JSEM members. In this letter, therefore, we would like to share with the JAAM and JSEM members the problems and challenges that the emergency medicine is currently facing. We hope that the information in this letter will help the national and local governments to understand the current circumstances.

The current problems and status of emergency medicine associated with COVID-19

- 1) **Influence of COVID-19:** The number of outpatients with suspected COVID-19 has significantly been increasing, particularly in primary emergency care facilities and North American-type emergency rooms (ER-type facilities) because clinics often reject patients with fever and/or respiratory symptoms and their burden has seriously been rising.
- 2) **Difficulty in ambulance transport:** The number of cases in which ambulance crews experience difficulty in finding a medical facility that accepts patients complaining of fever and/or respiratory symptoms has been increasing because the number of facilities that accept such patients is decreasing.
- 3) **Collapse of emergency medicine (a):** As a result, many emergency critical care centers are now forced to accept most of the patients with suspected pneumonia and cannot accept those with other severe conditions who are normally treated in such centers.
- 4) **Collapse of emergency medicine (b):** There is a serious concern because patients with conditions requiring emergency treatment such as myocardial infarction, stroke, and multiple traumas cannot receive timely medical care.
- 5) **Needs for rapid coronavirus testing:** On the other hand, there are a number of cases in which patients without COVID-19 symptoms who visited the ER for other diseases or trauma were found to have COVID-19 later. This therefore highlights the necessity of rapid coronavirus testing.

- 6) **Maintenance of emergency medical system:** Despite the current circumstances, doctors of primary, secondary, and tertiary emergency medical facilities are struggling to maintain the emergency medical system day and night, being on the front line in the fight against COVID-19 and dedicating themselves to treat general outpatients with other diseases as well as ICU patients with severe COVID-19 pneumonia.
- 7) **Shortage of personal protective equipment:** However, the number of depressurized rooms is insufficient and there is a critical shortage of personal protective equipment such as surgical masks, N95 masks, and gowns. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to care for COVID-19 patients because the safety of healthcare professionals engaged in emergency medicine cannot be secured. This is a serious concern that may accelerate the collapse of the emergency medical system.

**Safety measures:** Once an in-hospital COVID-19 infection occurs, many medical staff have to stop work for a while. Therefore, we advise that you take special precautions to prevent yourself from being infected. Failure to do so will expose your families to the risk of infection. Please consider all emergency patients as possible COVID-19 patients, even if they have no symptoms such as fever. In addition, wear appropriate personal protective equipment and be aware that there is a high infection risk when you take off such equipment.

We cooperate with all the JAAM and JSEM members, with people engaged in emergency medicine and the community to fight against COVID-19, maintain the emergency medical system, and protect the lives of people.

As part of our support, we post the latest information on COVID-19 and our messages on the JAAM's webpage. If you have any requests for the JAAM, JSEM, or the national or local government, please contact the office of the JAAM or JSEM.

Finally, we ask you to adequately take care of your health and those of the people around you.

Again, we extend our deepest appreciation for your dedication to emergency medicine in these critical moments.