COMPETENCES NECESSARY FOR JAPANESE PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER DIRECTORS IN RESPONDING TO PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

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Objective  To clarify the “competencies” required of public health center directors in “public health emergency responses.”

Methods  We selected as our subjects six major public health emergencies in Japan that accorded with a definition of a “health crisis.” Their types were: (1) natural disaster; (2) exposure to toxic substances caused by individuals; (3) food poisoning; and (4) accidental hospital infection. Item analysis was conducted using the Incident Analysis Method, based on the “Medical SAFER Technique.”

Results  The competencies of public health center directors required the following actions: ① to estimate the impact on local health from the “first notification” of the occurrence and the “initial investigation”; ② to manage a thorough investigation of causes; ③ to manage organizations undertaking countermeasures; ④ to promptly provide precise information on countermeasures, etc.; and ⑤ to create systems enabling effective application of countermeasures against recurrence of incidents, and to achieve social consensus.

Conclusion  For public health preparedness, public health center directors should have the following competencies: ① the ability to estimate the “impact” of public health emergencies that have occurred or may occur; ② be able to establish and carry out proactive policies; ③ be persuasive; and ④ have organizational management skills.

Key words: public health center directors, local health administrations, competence, public health emergency responses, emergency preparedness

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