

“Looking Back on the Disaster”

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(English Translation by Red Cross Nuclear Disaster Resource Center)

~~~ Instructing children how to take iodine preparation ~~~

On the next day after the whole night duty, I provided the instruction for taking iodine preparation to the evacuees at Fukushima High School who might be exposed to radiation. Since I didn't know much about iodine, I checked through the Internet to collect the information about it. After finishing delivering iodine preparation to children, the entire relief team went to Nihonmatsu to go through the body contamination screenings. It was the anxiety what happened to come, but it was the day with valuable experiences.

Immediately after the earthquake the Pharmacy Department had been open for 24 hours, and I was on the night shift on the 13th. When I was about to go home on the 14th (Monday) after working the night shift, I was asked to go to Fukushima High School to instruct on how to take iodine preparation to the evacuees who might have been exposed to radiation, and to prepare iodine for the infants. I went to Fukushima High School together with another Pharmacist, Mr. Usuki.

Since I didn't know much about iodine, I searched the Internet to collect the information about it. We brought some distilled water, simple syrup, medicine paper and cups with us.

First, the school staff gave 100mg potassium iodide pills to us. We grinded them with a hand coffee mill, measured it according to potency, and then added simple syrup for intake. Later on we switched to powdered potassium iodide which is easier to swallow.

This is how we prepared the medicine: Take 8.15 g of potassium iodide and dissolve it in the mixture of 250 ml of water and 250 ml of simple syrup. With this mixture, 1 ml is for a new born baby (equivalent to 16.3 mg of potassium iodide), 2 ml is for a 1 month to less than 3 years infant (equivalent to 32.6 mg), and 3 ml is for a 3 years to 7 years old child (equivalent to 48.9 ml), it was easy to take. However, since we did not bring much simple syrup and distilled water, later on we changed to dissolving 1 g of potassium iodide in 100 ml of distilled water which is equivalent to 10 mg potassium iodide per 1 ml of liquid. I added the simple syrup before we administered medicine. Despite some errors in the amounts we made in the beginning, fortunately we could manage to give the medicine to all the children at the high school. When we were ready to leave, we were told from our administrator that we needed to stop by Nihonmatsu. We found out later that there were some evacuees at the gymnasium of the high school who might have been exposed to radiation, so we had to receive body contamination screenings at Fukushima Gender Equality Center. It was my first experience so I was nervous. Fortunately none of us were exposed and we were able to head home.

Originally I was scheduled to go home at 9 a.m. after working the whole night shift, but I arrived at the hospital at around 6 p.m. and I went home at around 7 p.m.

A series of hydrogen explosions occurred and Fukushima was being contaminated by radioactivity. I was worried about the future, but it was a day with valuable experiences.