



Establishment of patient advocate and consultation services by local governments to promote patient safety; efforts in Japan

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INTRODUCTION

- Patient engagement is an important part of measures to promote patient safety, and the WHO's Global action plan 2021-2030 also identifies patient and family engagement as a foundation to support the vision of "A world in which no one is harmed in health care"⁽¹⁾.
- Patient advocacy and consultation are measures to achieve patient engagement, and services are offered in various forms in countries that are committed to universal health coverage^(2,3).
- In Japan, a patient advocate and consultation service has been operated by local governments since 2003 to promote medical safety.
- The establishment of patient safety support centers that provide this service is obligatory by law, but all of 47 prefectures and public health centers in 110 major cities have established such centers.
- Patient safety support centers play an important role in providing medical consultations to patients and their families.

AIM

To describe the number of consultation cases and their content in the 47 prefectures of Japan over the past five years.

RESULTS

- The total number of cases per year was approximately 46000.
- The total number of cases has remained largely unchanged over the past five years (Table 1).
- When looking at contents of cases, the proportion of complaints to the total number of cases showed a decreasing trend (Figure 1).
- Of the total number of cases, complaints accounted for an average of around 40%.
- There were significant differences in the total number of cases per center in each of the 47 prefectures.
- Of the 47 prefectures, Tokyo had the highest number of consultations.

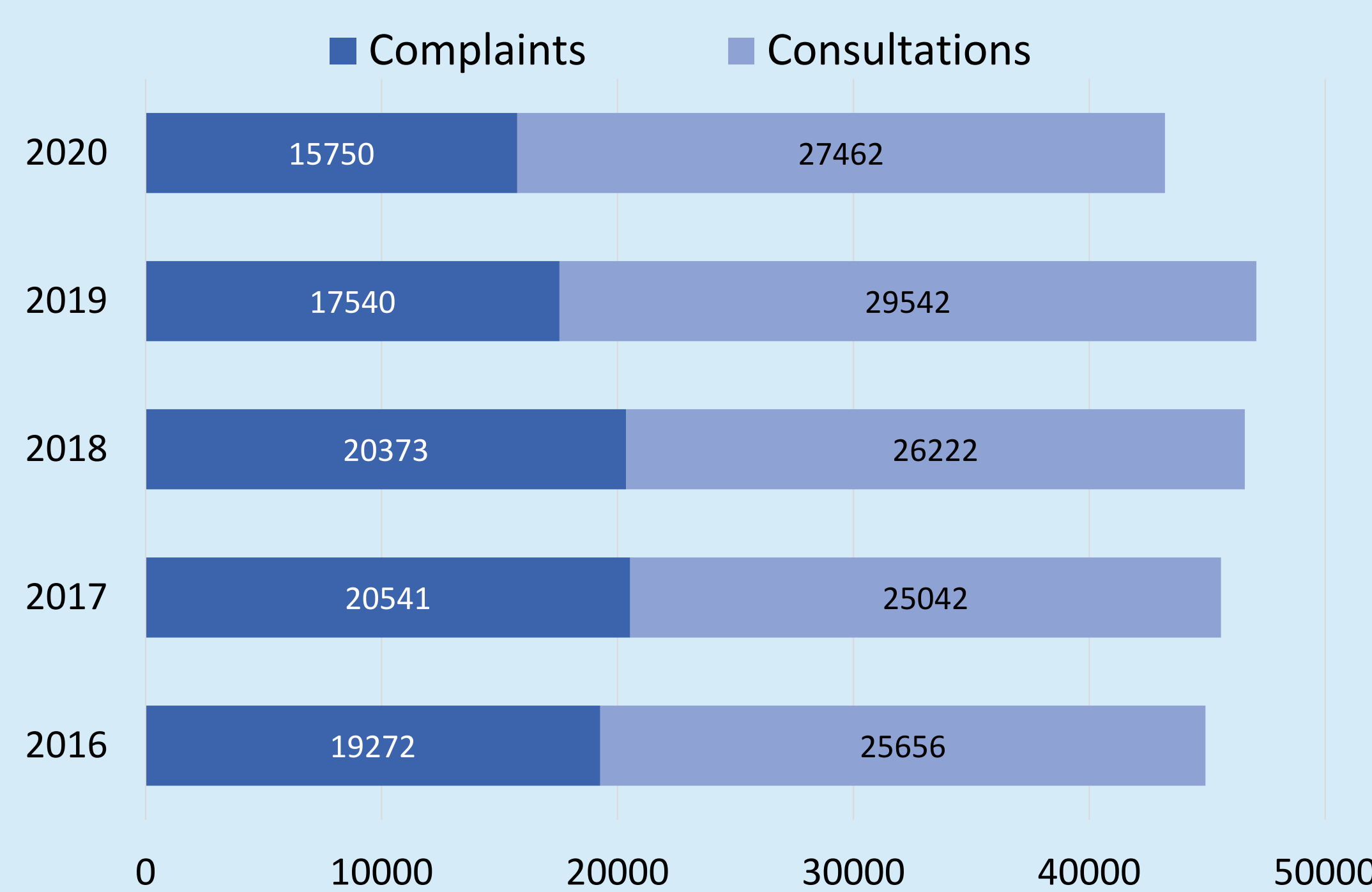


Figure 1. The cases of Complaints and Consultations from 2016 to 2019

Table 1. Trends in the number of cases by prefecture

Prefectures	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Hokkaido	280	211	212	200	253
Aomori	457	415	326	189	185
Iwate	398	434	560	1019	891
Miyagi	1951	2006	1942	1787	1538
Akita	400	377	421	428	351
Yamagata	541	484	404	513	378
Fukushima	671	510	445	415	362
Ibaraki	2436	2396	2146	1879	1654
Tochigi	609	632	724	836	1000
Gunma	1287	1406	1433	1473	1290
Saitama	3091	3620	3362	3793	4264
Chiba	3290	3220	3312	2801	2934
Tokyo	9689	10106	10491	8780	9101
Kanagawa	1982	2406	2373	2310	2226
Niigata	569	545	600	643	686
Toyama	404	537	509	296	319
Ishikawa	379	516	352	320	316
Fukui	159	190	244	275	195
Yamanashi	401	411	N/A	352	360
Nagano	314	423	386	389	257
Gifu	399	423	411	413	391
Shizuoka	1263	1278	1466	1260	1226
Aichi	1297	1308	1351	1311	1300
Mie	1013	912	1103	1216	821
Shiga	685	565	637	613	585
Kyoto	1685	1963	1611	1514	1357
Osaka	697	797	806	905	1077
Hyogo	771	1015	1122	1053	1175
Nara	383	371	463	493	625
Wakayama	690	717	724	659	512
Tottori	108	89	126	147	118
Shimane	163	168	186	177	170
Okayama	665	767	721	483	515
Hiroshima	426	546	591	583	580
Yamaguchi	393	231	215	343	222
Tokushima	73	232	116	167	218
Kagawa	477	521	438	380	390
Ehime	122	190	251	293	281
Kochi	939	774	708	636	677
Fukuoka	1108	2067	1395	197	1034
Saga	264	288	282	264	113
Nagasaki	273	243	243	654	243
Kumamoto	370	386	482	621	745
Oita	466	500	511	232	666
Miyazaki	147	174	216	549	167
Kagoshima	568	661	689	1134	540
Okinawa	608	649	661	588	620

METHOD

- We used publicly available data from an annual complete survey on the operation status conducted by the Japan Society for Healthcare Quality and Safety, commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.
- Data on the number of consultations at the 47 prefectural centers were analyzed.
- Trends in the number of consultations and their content in each prefecture from April 2016 to March 2021 were examined.
- R was used for statistical analysis.
- For review by the Ethics Committee, consultation was conducted with the Ethics Committee of the University of Yamanashi, and it was determined that ethics review was not required.

CONCLUSIONS

- Patient safety support centers are expected to contribute to better patient understanding and appropriate decision-making by promoting medical dialogue, to assist in resolving disputes between patients and doctors, and to improve mental health services through consultation and response to complaints.
- It is one measure to promote patient engagement in medical care and is considered important in terms of improving the quality of universal health coverage.
- Other countries are also providing such services in accordance with their own healthcare systems, and further study is required to determine the desirable form of such services from the viewpoint of promoting patient safety.

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