

Development and Future Prospect for Advanced Practitioner Leaders in Island Nursing

President of Okinawa Prefectural College of Nursing
Miwako Noguchi

Hello everyone. Thank you for participating in our international symposium that is part of our “Development and Future Prospect for Advanced Practitioner Leaders in Island Nursing” program funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as their Program for Promoting University Education Reform (what is called GP). I would like to express my special appreciation for today’s symposium presenters from Australia, Guam, Tinian, and Japanese mainland: Dr. Ellis, Dr. Tsuda, Ms. Long and Dr. Ishigaki. We also have audiences at our Miyako satellite campus in the Miyako Island who are participating through our tele-conference system.

Island life and nursing have been evaluated as ambivalent reality. For example, while some would argue that “Island life is poor,” others would say that “An island is the most beautiful place in which I want to live forever.” Another ambivalence would be expressed that “Island nursing makes me left behind” while others would say that “Island nursing is worthwhile (and finally I could experience real nursing).” There are many small remote islands in Okinawa. Okinawa *per se* is an island. Since ancient times, Okinawa, which was called the Ryukyu archipelago, has interacted with Pacific islands. Among other things, Japan

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Moving Forward for Good Island Nursing Motive (#1)

「Island life is poor and sad」 and 「An island is the most beautiful place in which one wants to live forever」

「Island nursing makes him/her left behind」 and 「Island nursing is worthwhile」

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Moving Forward for Good Island Nursing Motive (#2)

Many Remote Islands in Okinawa, Okinawa itself is islands, Japan itself is a chain of islands

It is significant to seek for better practices of nursing in island areas.

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itself is an island country. When we take Japan – and Okinawa in particular – into consideration, it can be said that investigation and research of island nursing is a very important task.

Education and research of “Island Nursing” were promised to the people of Okinawa prefecture as the institutional master plan when Okinawa Prefectural College of Nursing was established. For more than a decade since the establishment, lectures in island nursing and training programs at islands were part of our curriculum, and researches related to island nursing in various educational/ research fields were implemented. However, was it sufficient? It could be hardly argued that our college as a whole had systematically dealt with island nursing, and thus it left us room for self reflection and review.

Therefore, in 2008, we applied to two grants of the GP program, and the two proposals were accepted. Today’s symposium is part of the Graduate School GP Project, and the agenda of Undergraduate GP Project – which was also adopted in 2008 – is “Educational Practices of Health Nursing that Make Good Use of Island Environment for Learning.” It was reasonable (although not obligatory) that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and

Technology decided to support our college because the Ministry belongs to Japan which is an island country, and the grant application was from the college of nursing in Okinawa which covers many small remote islands. We appreciated the support from the Ministry that was a favorable wind for us.

First of all, I would like to talk about a concept of island nursing.

The term “Islands” carries cultural meaning which is defined by multiple factors such as history, industry and economy as well as geographical meaning. Geographically, the term carries a characteristic of “ocean surrounding” while “remoteness” is a characteristic of history, civilization and culture of islands. The characteristics bring us both “happiness” and “unhappiness” as well as “convenience” and “inconvenience.” In islands, people enjoy various boons from the sea and

**Moving Forward for Good
Island Nursing
Motive (#3)**

Okinawa Prefectural College of Nursing
has a curriculum of island nursing since its
establishment.

It implements research in island nursing as well.

However;
Has it been sufficient?

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**Departure (2 GP Proposals were
Adopted by the Ministry of Education,
Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)**

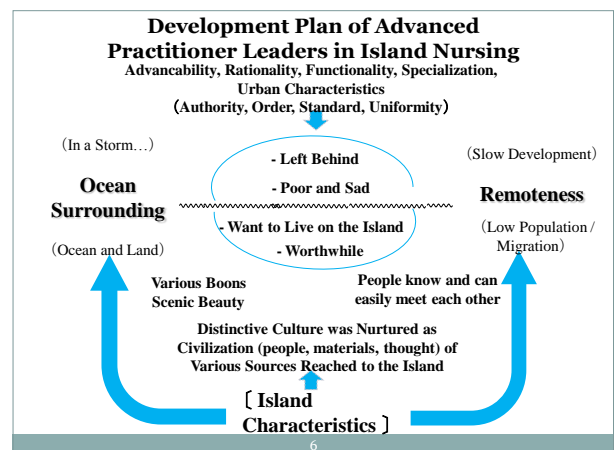
Systematic Program that Enhances
Graduate-Level Educational Reform

[Development of Advanced Practitioner
Leaders in Island Nursing]

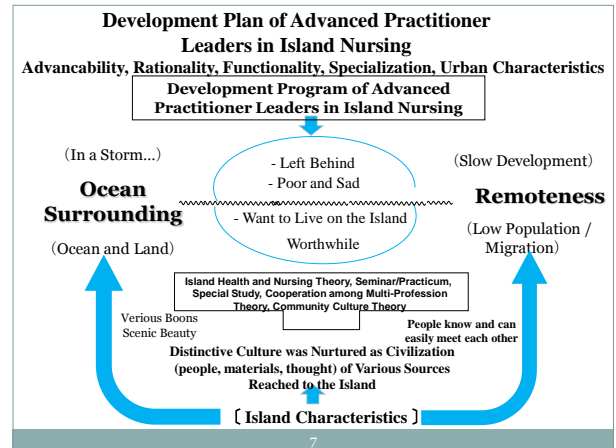
Enhancement Program of University
Education in High Quality

[Educational Practices of Health Nursing
that Make Good Use of Island Environment
for Learning]

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land as well as bright scenic beauty. The smaller the island is, the more integrated life people have since they know and can easily meet each other. Effects of civilization arrive at an island from many directions on ocean currents, and the effects are nurtured in the enclosed environment, turning into distinctive culture. Therefore, people love and are proud of their island and hope to “spend whole life in the island.” Island nurses can feel that their nursing occupation is worthwhile because they can support island people to realize their hope. However, when we look at islands from a “globalizing modern perspective” that values aspects of advancability, rationality, functionality, specialization and urban characteristics, island life seems inconvenient regarding transportation due to the sea and climate. Islands have insufficient materials



Advanced Practice of Island Nursing that Gradually Became Visible through Supervision of Practical Nursing Research

- Assigned Research (Master’s Program)
How to Evaluate Health Nursing Activities in Islands (tentative)
- Assigned Research (Master’s Program)
Nursing Supports for Elders’ Self-Management in Taking Oral Drugs at Remote Island Clinics (tentative)
- Special Research II (Doctor’s Program)
Research on Nursing Activity Model for Remote Island Supports Implemented by Core Hospitals at Island Areas (tentative)

and information, and that delays development. As a result, young people as well as sickly elders leave their islands, and sad experiences of separation increase. There are few advanced medical facilities and specialists on an island, and the residents worry that they would be left behind for some reason or another.

Our program aims to develop “advanced practitioner leaders in island nursing” who can take on and lead island nursing in the field of previously mentioned island life and nursing characteristics.

The graduate students who entered the program in 2009 completed courses, seminars and practical training, and then currently, 3 students are working on assigned research and a doctoral dissertation. The slide shows the themes of their research although they are yet tentative.

For one of the assigned research themes in the Master’s program “How to Evaluate Health Nursing Activities in Islands,” the student collects data by researching on 40 year activities of island health nurses with the particular focus on development of maternal and child health care practices. It intends to answer a proposed research question; “What has developed island nursing?” The student aims to provide junior fellows in public health nursing with an activity model based on her research outcomes.

With another theme “Nursing Supports for Elders’ Self-Management in Taking Oral Drugs at

Remote Islands Clinics,” one student aims to discover reality of island nursing and examine how it should be implemented by analyzing nursing supports for elders’ self-management in taking oral drugs which seem very common part of nursing practices.

The doctoral student’s dissertation topic is: “Research on Nursing Activity Model for Remote Island Supports Implemented by Core Hospitals at Island Areas.” The student is participating in a committee, which was established in the Miyako Hospital (where our program is located) to review nursing practices that have supported remote islands and to promote reform. The student aims to analyze the whole process of review and reform, examine how the nursing supports for remote islands should be, and propose a model.

I have found out some phenomena which

deem “distinctive characteristics of island life and nursing” since I have supervised the three students’ research assignments. I would like to divide the phenomena into two categories and analyze them. The two are phenomena that “advantage of islands or to take advantage of island characteristics” and “weakness of islands or to overcome the weakness.”

In islands, situations of other residents are visible. For example, they are able to find out that “My son is back now, so that I will visit him” or that “A boy is playing with his younger sister who has physical challenges, and because of this, his classmates are experienced to socialize with physically challenged children.” The latter example greatly advances normalization of physically challenged people. Another example is that “Mentally challenged people help sugarcane harvest, and thus they are not present at a traveling clinic.” This example is a very good tendency. Other two examples are; “She forgets to see the doctor, but constantly comes to a daycare center. It is possible to provide her with medical examinations if we go find her at the center” and “Begin with instruction on the use of drugs, I find myself giving them instructions for house repairs and lifestyle guidance for the family.”

Nurses and public health nurses in islands know residents’ feeling that “they like the islands they live on and want to continue to live there.” The original reason that she began a traveling consultation service for health and development of physically (and/or mentally) challenged children as a maternal and child health care activity was due to her feeling that “It is regrettable that one whole family has to leave the island only because they cannot provide their child who has heavy physical challenges with rehabilitation services on the island. We would like to solve such issues.”

Nursing Practices that Take Advantage of Island Environment and Overcome Weaknesses (and then turn the Weaknesses into Strengths)

Taking Advantage 1

In Islands, Situations of Residents are Visible

- His son is back now, so that I will visit him.
- A boy is playing with his younger sister who has physical challenges. It is observable that because of this, his classmates are experienced to socialize with children with physical challenges.
- Mentally challenged people help sugarcane harvest. Thus, they are not present at a traveling clinic.
- She forgets to see the doctor, but constantly comes to a daycare center. It is possible to provide her with medical examinations if we go find her at the center.
- Begin with instruction on the use of drugs, I find myself giving them instructions for house reform and lifestyle guidance for the family.

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Taking Advantage 2

We understand residents’ feeling that they like the island they live on and want to continue to live there

- It is regrettable that one whole family had to leave the island only because they could not provide their child who has heavy physical challenges with rehabilitation services on the island. We would like to solve such issues.

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I would like to mention another point which is not mentioned in the student's research. In islands, there is development of day care facilities for seniors that are small scale but multi-functional. Since young people leave islands, there are many elders who live alone. The unique development of senior care facilities is to serve for the island people who "want to live on the island for the rest of their life."

Islands make people feel that they "want to improve the situation by mutual help" rather than islands are inhabited by people who originally have that feeling. For example, "A staff at a public office can take care of each bedridden elder in the case of emergent transportation or typhoon, and they know well what to do" or "When the fruits of medical examinations are tangible, a general staff at a public office becomes more supportive."

On the islands, people are frank and can ask others any favour. There is a public health nurse who has an experience that "I was told that 'You have never had a child with physical challenges, so that you won't understand how the parents feel,' then could be clearly conscious about myself, and could device various means (to practice public health care)." Other experiences are "I thought it would be

a good idea to arrange an inter-parents meeting for those who are in the similar (difficult) situation. Then I asked those who are more experienced to take care of the less experienced. The experienced parents agreed very willingly," "At first, when I asked office workers for support, they were reluctant. However, when good results are tangible, they are well engaged as it is 'for the sake of children in our island,'" and "At a get-together, I did all I could do - play *Sanshin* (Okinawan 3 stringed instrument) and bring noodles to be served - as it is 'for the sake of children in our island.'"

It is said that people "create cohesion by gathering, eating and having fun together" and "cook goat soup at any gathering and befriended each other." What about in other islands? "Public health nurses take care of lunch to allow parents to share a relaxed moment," and this is a very important part of public health nurses in islands. Another story is that "when scholars came to

Taking Advantage 3

Want to improve the situation by mutual help

- **A staff at a public office can take care of each bedridden elder in the case of emergency transportation or typhoon.**
- **When the fruits of medical examinations are tangible, a general staff at a public office becomes more supportive.**

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Taking Advantage 4

On the Island, People are Frank and Can Ask Others any Favour

- I was told that "You (public health nurses) have never had a child with physical challenges, so that you won't understand how the parents feel"
- I thought it would be a good idea to arrange an inter-parents meeting for those who are in the similar (difficult) situation. Then I asked those who are more experienced to take care of the less experienced. The experienced parents agreed very willingly.
- At first, when I asked office workers for support, they were reluctant. However, when good results are tangible, they are well engaged as it is "for the sake of children in our island"
- At a get-together, I did all I could do - play *Sanshin* (Okinawan 3 stringed instrument) and bring noodles to be served - as it is "for the sake of children in our island"

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Taking Advantage 5

Create Cohesion by Gathering, Eating and Having Fun Together

- **Cook goat soup at any gathering and befriend each other**
- **Public health nurses take care of lunch to allow parents to share a relaxed moment**
- **When scholars came to the island for medical examinations, we entertained them, held workshops in evening, learned with joy; it worked very well, so that they stayed engaged for a long time**

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the island for medical examinations, we entertained them, held workshops in evening, learned with joy; it worked very well, so that they stayed engaged for a long time.” It worked well not only to keep the scholars engaged but to get know each other.

I would like to move onto “Overcoming Weakness.” People on islands experience “frequent traffic and transportation shut-downs.” Efforts to overcome island weakness include “when typhoons come, we – who work in medical fields in the island – inform stock of medical supplies each other, and it creates cohesion (among medical professionals),” “We can predict the length of a typhoon; if it is necessary, patients with oxygen therapy can stay in a hospital during a typhoon; it reduces anxiety of home medical care,” and arrange “earlier hospitalization of parturient mothers in remote islands as we can expect storm-tossed waters and busyness of the families.” The last two examples indicate more of a uniquely arranged aspect of island hospitalization than any other social aspect. Another story is that “due to a typhoon, I was stuck in a remote island for a week together with one scholar who happened to be on the medical examination trip; then we planned new activities and research projects and befriended; and I was empowered.” Island environment

equips the nurses with such a tough bearing as to “turn the potential disaster into their advantage.”

In islands of small population, they are not able to fill all specialist posts. Specialists tend to work at urban areas. Two examples that turned advantaged situations into positive results are that “We do not have specialist personnel in the island; we resorted to top-ranking doctors and clinical psychotherapists from Tokyo whom we met at trainings; implemented a simultaneous medical examination by the excellent experts’ team;” and “Working with the inspired top-ranking specialists let me materialize my knowledge into the advanced technique to guide a family that have a challenged child / children.” It is also mentioned that “In different assignments, sometimes, few different members participate, but most members are regulars; we can take and

Overcoming Weakness 1

Frequent Traffic and Transportation Shut-Downs

- When typhoons come, we - who work for a medical field in the island - inform stock of medical supplies each other; it creates cohesion
- We can predict the length of a typhoon; if it is necessary, patients with oxygen therapy can stay in a hospital during a typhoon; it reduces anxiety of home medical care
- Earlier hospitalization of parturient mothers in remote islands as we can expect storm-tossed waters and busyness of the families
- Due to a typhoon, I was stuck in a remote island for a week together with one scholar who happened to be on the medical examination trip; then we planned new activities and research projects and befriended; and I was empowered

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Overcoming Weakness 2

No Specialist Personnel

- We do not have specialist personnel in the island; we resorted to top-ranking doctors and clinical psychotherapists from Tokyo whom we met at trainings; implemented a simultaneous medical examination by an excellent experts’ team
- Working with inspired top-ranking specialists let me materialize my knowledge into the advanced technique to guide a family that have a challenged child / children
- In different assignments, sometimes, few different members participate, but most members are same; we can take and exchange roles without the arrangement, then learn know-how each other

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Overcoming Weakness 3

If you never ask for the moon, you will just reconcile yourself to the situation

- A public nurse, who was transferred from the Okinawa main island to the island, looked at challenged children, who had never been trained, and then said “If the children could have received proper training, their lives would have been more blessing”; the motivation to develop our traveling clinic/counseling was that we were inspired by such outsiders’ perspective

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exchange roles without the arrangement, then learn know-how each other.”

“If you never ask for the moon, you will just reconcile yourself to the situation.” It is reported that “A public nurse, who was transferred from the Okinawa main island to the remote island, looked at challenged children, who had never been trained, and then said “If the children could have received proper training, their lives would have been more blessing”; the motivation to develop our traveling clinic/counseling was that we were inspired by such outsiders’ perspective.” In islands, it is necessary to pay attention to what is happening outside the islands and be interested in new movement all the time.

In islands, people “tend to feel being ‘left behind.’” “Public nurses – who had rapport with island residents – associated the residents with medical specialists, so that the residents could talk with the specialists (scholars) without hesitation” although residents were at first hesitant to speak in the meeting. The public health nurse said “the top-ranking professionals/scholars paid attention to what we (island nurses) had been doing normally; received better evaluation on our practice than we had expected; we built our confidence.” Moreover, the scholars were impressed that the

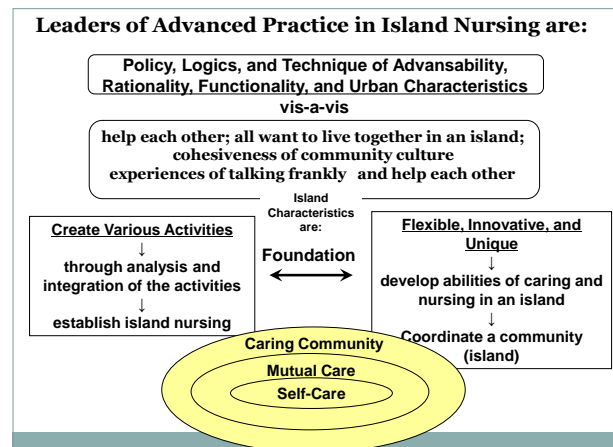
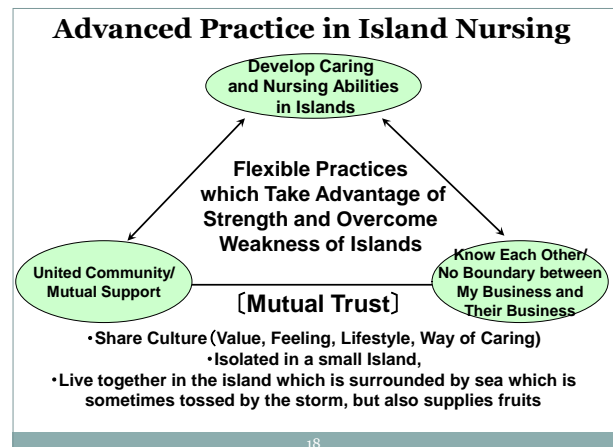
public health nurses in the island have a good grasp on all residents and are concerned about the children as if they treat their own children.

Based on the characteristics of island life and nursing which are seen through the research findings of the graduate students, I tried to answer the question; what is “advanced practice in island nursing?” Residents and nurses share culture and live together in a small remote island which is surrounded by the sea. Based on the mutual trust which is created in the island setting, elements such as “united community and mutual support” and “know each other; no boundary between my business and their business” can become a powerful implement. I would infer that island nurses can organize “flexible practices which take advantage of strength and

Overcoming Weakness 4
Tend to Feel Being “Left Behind”

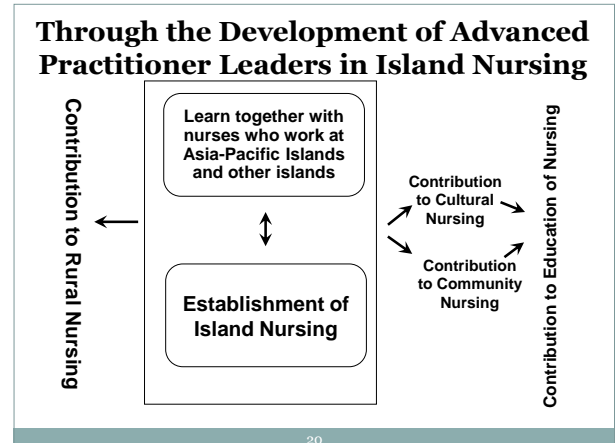
- **Public nurses - who had rapport with residents - associated island residents with medical specialists, so that the residents could talk with the scholars without hesitation**
- **The top-ranking professionals/scholars paid attention to what we had been doing normally; received better evaluation on our practice than we had expected; we built our confidence**

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overcome weakness of islands” and develop caring and nursing abilities in the island by resting on the implement. I would like to examine this point further in the future research.

Therefore, leaders of advanced practice in island nursing are expected to come up with unique practices, develop caring and nursing abilities in an island, and coordinate a



community (and/or island) with their flexible and innovative ways of thinking, which are located at the opposite pole of policy, logics and technique of advansability, rationality, functionality and urban characteristics. It can be based on island characteristics which appear in the day-to-day island life, that is, the “power of cohesion” of community culture (for example, to help each other and a shared desire to continue to live in an island) as well as “long lasting experiences of frank communication and mutual help.” As a result of their flexible ways of thinking and practice, the leaders are expected to “create various innovative activities” and, at the same time, to contribute to the establishment of the science of island nursing.

What we aim in the GP program is to establish the science of island nursing by collaboratively learning with nurses who work at islands in the world and also through the development of advance practitioner leaders in nursing at Okinawa islands. It enriches the science of community nursing and provides various data for the science of cultural nursing. The two will be the foundations of new nursing in the globalizing 21st Century and may open up nursing education of the new age. In the near future, out research results will be presented at the conference of Japan Society of Rural and Remote Area Nursing. The globe is shrinking. Water is depleting and deteriorating. As my concluding statement, I would propose my wish that – in addition to islands (no matter if they are bridged) – back regions in continents and isolated remote areas are turning into sites where people can enjoy prosperous life. Thank you.