



Free Dental Treatment for Children of Asylum Seekers at Tsurumi University Dental Hospital

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Introduction

A volunteer dental team by the name of the Refugee Project Team (RPT) organized in Tsurumi University has been providing asylum seekers staying in Japan with free dental treatment since February 2010. By the end of January, 2013, RPT had treated 105 patients from 28 countries with a total of 713 treatment visits. It has been recognized as a good practice by the United High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Among the patients were 10 pedodontic patients, 5 from Turkey and 5 from Myanmar. The present report focuses on our experiences gained in our pediatric dental clinic.

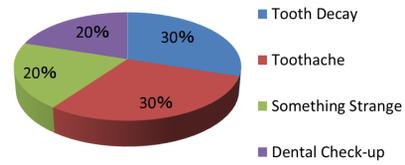
[Refugee and Asylum Seeker]

A **refugee** is a person who is outside their country of origin or habitual residence because they have suffered (or fear) persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or because they are a member of a persecuted 'social group' or because they are fleeing natural disaster. Such a person may be referred to as an '**asylum seeker**' until recognized by the state where they make a claim.

[Circumstances for Asylum Seekers in Japan]

- Low recognition rate as refugee
- No working permit
- No public health insurance
- Limited governmental assistance: ¥1,500/day (≒15USD) for living expense
 ¥40,000/month (≒400USD) for housing expense

(A) Chief Complaints of the Children



(B) Types of Given Treatment

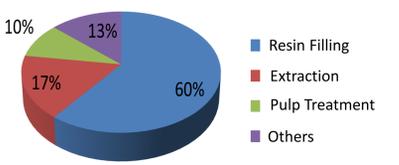
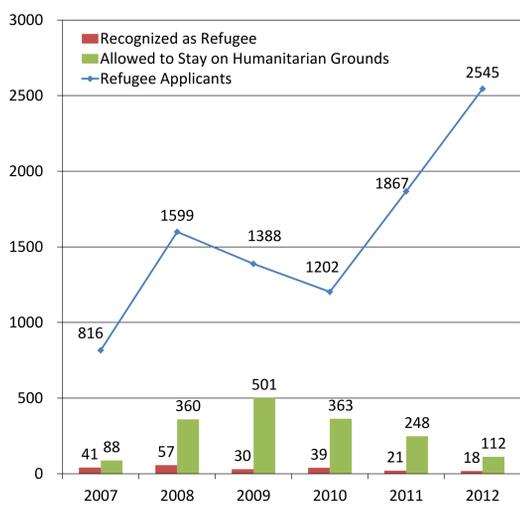


Fig.6 Chief Complaints of the Children and Types of Given Treatment in Our Pediatric Dental Clinic

The majority of chief complaints were tooth decay and toothache. Resin filling and pulp treatment were given to preservable teeth, while extraction was conducted on nonpreservable and supernumerary ones. There were also children indicating need of space maintaining and early orthodontic treatments that are beyond the scope of our present assistance program.



Ministry of Justice
http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanr/ji/kouhou/nyuukokukanri03_00094.html

Fig.1 Too Few Recognitions Compared to Rising Number of Asylum Seekers in Japan



Fig.4 Consultation Scene in Our Pediatric Dental Clinic

Fig.5 Treatment Scene in Our Pediatric Dental Clinic



Fig.6 Treatment Scene in Our Pediatric Dental Clinic

Myanmar

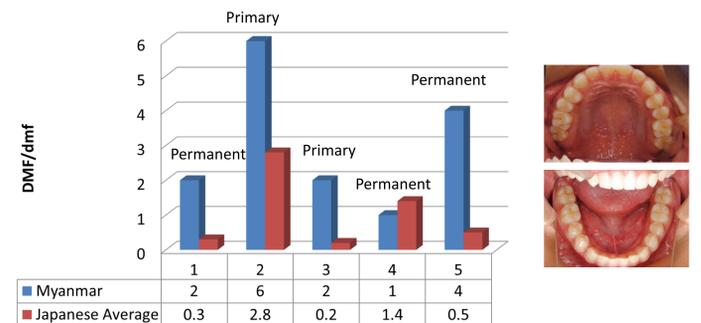


Fig.7 Children of Asylum Seekers from Myanmar

Asylum seekers from Myanmar: Their DMF and dmf scores tended to be higher than those of the Japanese (Survey of Dental Diseases, 2011). The evaluation was made on the primary teeth for 2 children out of the 5 and the permanent teeth for the remaining 3 children.

Turkey

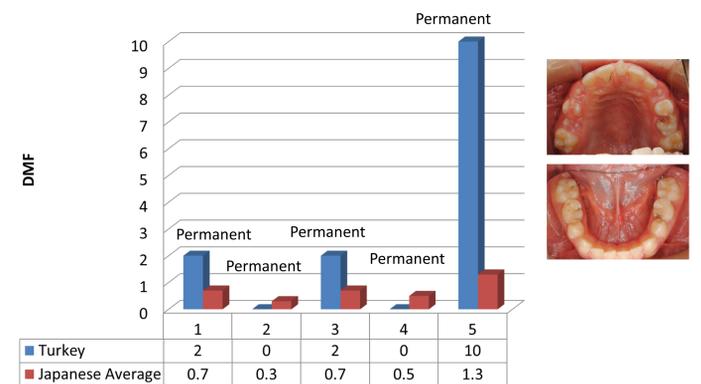


Fig.8 Children of Asylum Seekers from Turkey

Asylum seekers from Turkey: Their DMF tended to be higher than those of the Japanese (Survey of Dental Diseases, 2011). The evaluation was made on the permanent teeth for 5 children.

The results indicate that the asylum seekers from both countries have more dental caries than the Japanese.

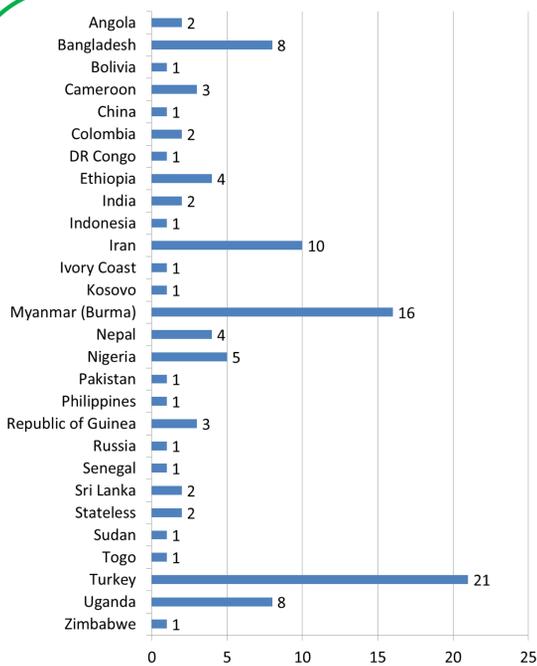
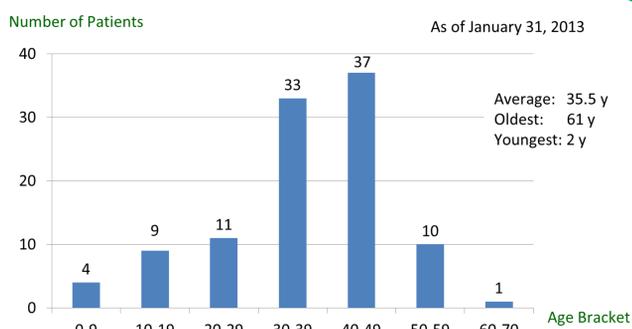


Fig.2 Number of Patients by Nationality at Tsurumi University



Total Number of Patients: 105
 Male : Female = 73 : 32

Fig.3 Number of Patients by Age Bracket at Tsurumi University

Discussion

Above all, we are proud of being part of this unique humanitarian project, the very first of its kind to our knowledge. From the view point of DMF and dmf, both Myanmar and Turkish children tended to show higher points than the Japanese counterparts. Our experience in communication and contact with the patients and their accompanying parents gave us a glimpse of their national characteristics and difficult refugee circumstances. Among the former that can be comparatively enumerated are Turkish pride, Myanmar patience and Japanese punctiliousness. Among the latter is unstable refugee life reflected in their more frequent cancellation of appointments. While full-fledged statistical analysis is yet to be presented with a greater number of patients, a sense of fulfillment experienced by each member of the team is so enormous in this project that we are convinced that we are opening up a new field of dentistry in light of international social contribution.

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