

Can *Izakaya* pubs and *snacks* contribute to improving mental health of middle-aged Japanese men?

Mayumi Ohnishi, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Rieko Nakao, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Ryoko Kawasaki, RN<sup>1</sup>, Akiko Nitta, RN<sup>1</sup>,  
Yukari Hamada, RN<sup>2</sup>, Hideyuki Nakane, MD, PhD<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and <sup>2</sup> Kenou-Public Health Office, Nagasaki, Japan

e-mail: [mohnishi@nagasaki-u.ac.jp](mailto:mohnishi@nagasaki-u.ac.jp)

Japan shows a relatively high prevalence rate of death due to suicide, with more than 30,000 suicides every year since 1998. According to Nagasaki prefecture health office, in the last decade, there has been a high prevalence of suicide among middle-aged men, with debt and/or losing job being listed as one of the major causes. Previous studies have suggested several ways of relieving stress among Japanese people,<sup>1</sup> but effective approaches to increase resilience as a means of preventing suicide among Japanese middle-aged men were yet to be established. The authors conducted this study to determine to what extent *izakaya* pubs and *snack* establishments can contribute to mitigating stress among middle-aged Japanese men by providing a place for them to de-stress. A self-administered questionnaire was posted to masters of a total of 260 *izakaya* pubs and *snacks* registered in Ohmura-city, Nagasaki prefecture, in December 2009. The questionnaire elicited information about demographic characteristics, years of experience of working in *izakaya* pubs and *snacks*, experiences of being asked for advices on personal matters by their customers  $\geq 40$  years old, and the kinds of matters on which they were asked to advise. In total, 84 returned the completed questionnaires. A further 19 participated in telephone interviews using the same questionnaire, which was conducted with those who did not initially respond. In total, 103 respondents were

included in the analysis. Half of the respondents from *snacks* were 60 years old or older, and 43 (68.3%) had 10 years or more of experience working in *snack* establishments. The most frequent matters which they were asked to listen to and give advice on were those related to work (56.3%). Regardless of sex and age of the respondents, those respondents with longer working histories in *izakaya* pubs and *snack* establishments had higher likelihood of experience of customers consulting them about debts/loans (adjusted odds ratio: 5.48,  $P < 0.05$ ). Having a place to complain and receiving counseling could potentially mitigate stress in critical situations.<sup>2</sup> *Izakaya* pubs and *snack* establishments with masters with more years of experience may function as one possible avenue of stress mitigation by providing such a place where middle-aged men could consult on various issues such as debts/loans, and thereby potentially take a role of gate-keeper to prevent suicide.

## REFERENCES

1. Sakamoto S, Tanaka E, Neichi K, Sato K, Ono Y. Sociopsychological factors relating to suicide prevention in a Japanese rural community: coping behaviors and attitudes toward depression and suicidal ideation. *Psychiatry Clin. Neurosci.* 2006; 60: 676-686.
2. Rosen CS, Matthieu MM, Norris FH. Factors predicting crisis counselor referrals to other crisis counseling, disaster relief, and psychological services: a cross-site analysis of post-Katrina programs. *Adm. Policy Ment. Health* 2009; 36: 837-842.