

Tuberculosis Control Policies and Discussion in Taiwan during Japanese Colonial Period

Shu-ching Chang

ABSTRACT

This article is aimed at analyzing the control policies and researches on tuberculosis adopted by Japanese colonial government. It also covers treatment of and prevention recommendations on tuberculosis made by doctors and health personnel. First, the article will analyze the death rate of tuberculosis for Taiwanese and Japanese residing in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period. The analysis shows such death rate is lower for the Japanese who resided in Taiwan than the Taiwanese and the Japanese who lived in Japan. Tuberculosis did not pose a significant threat on Japanese residing in Taiwan at that time. In addition, Japanese colonial government focused on treating contagious diseases to prevent epidemics. Therefore, it was not until 1915 that designated sanitariums were established.

Second, the article analyzes the establishment of tuberculosis treatment and prevention institutes and the announcement of related regulations during the Japanese colonial period. This aspect focuses on the comparison of tuberculosis treatment and prevention institutes and the announcement of related regulations between colonial Taiwan and Japan. The comparison reveals that when treatment was the main focus of the fight against tuberculosis, the shortage of beds available for people infected with tuberculosis became a serious problem. The announcement of the "Anti-Spitting Law" and the "Tuberculosis Prevention Law" in Taiwan came ten to twenty years later than that in Japan. Japanese colonial government took on an active role in the prevention of tuberculosis in the 1920's and 1930's. This was closely related to the need for manpower and strengthening the aptitude of the population as a result of the war. Third, the article analyzes researches and prevention recommendations on tuberculosis during the Japanese colonial period. Although German scientist Robert Koch had already established the theory that "the disease was caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*" in 1882, some doctors still emphasized on the important roles played by "constitution," "heredity," or "endemic" in the process of being infected with tuberculosis. What is worth noting is the way tuberculosis was treated during the Japa-

nese colonial period. Treatments of tuberculosis were mostly for supportive therapies which focused on prolonging the life of and relieving the pain suffered by patients. The administration of medicine was only for the treatment of symptoms. Convalescence in a quiet environment was the general rule at that time. Finally, the article points out that, although the death rate of tuberculosis decreased slowly during the Japanese colonial period, actions taken by Japanese colonial government had some impacts on tuberculosis control measures taken by the subsequent KMT government.

Keywords: tuberculosis, phthisis, Taiwan medical history, disease history