



# Nagoya University Hospital

## The first national university hospital in Japan to be accredited by Joint Commission International

In Japan, national university hospitals are considered role models as integrated institutions for medical care, education and research. There are nearly 50 national university hospitals in Japan. Nagoya University Hospital in Tokai was the first hospital among them to be accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI). Nagoya University began as a temporary hospital and medical school in 1871. Known for its research expertise, Nagoya University is proud to have produced six out of 13 Japanese Nobel Prize winners in the 21st century.

### Why pursue Joint Commission International accreditation?

As a 1,000-bed hospital, Nagoya University Hospital sees as many as 3,000 patients a day, making monitoring patient safety a challenge. More than 20 years ago, a fatal medical accident occurred; rather than hide the incident, the hospital chose to search for a way to establish a culture of medical safety for every staff person. After extensive research, they chose Joint Commission International.

“The biggest difference between JCI and other external evaluations,” says Nagoya University Hospital Director, Professor Yasuhiro Kodera, “is that JCI requires that all hospital staff must join in all required activities. Plus JCI’s patient safety standards – the International Patient Safety Goals, or IPSG – are unsurpassed.”

Another reason Nagoya University Hospital chose JCI was to support their mission of building an international reputation. Since many of Nagoya’s students and faculty members are from overseas, and the hospitals in their home

countries are often accredited by either Joint Commission or JCI, it made sense to have the same external functional evaluation as other university hospitals.

### Overcoming challenges along the way

According to Assistant Hospital Director and JCI Coordinator, Professor Tadashi Matsushita, the initial mock survey was unsatisfactory due to a lack of sufficient policy and procedure documents. But with advice/guidance from JCI, Nagoya University Hospital began to standardize the documents they needed.

“In developing the policy and procedure documents, we clearly realized that we don’t have sufficient rules on our work in the hospital,” notes Professor Matsushita. “Although each medical unit and department runs well with their own rules, most of the rules are not hospital wide, so it caused communication problems. Now we are all working by the same rules and communication is better.”

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“As a national academic medical center, we focus on developing knowledge and skills. JCI standards and policies that are learned by our staff and students will also have a positive impact when these skilled students and staff become practitioners who deliver quality care and patient safety beyond Nagoya University.”

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For many, the JCI standards heightened their awareness of patient safety issues. “If airlines or railway companies have fatal accidents, it is immediately related to the reputation of the company. However, the staff of the medical institutions don’t always think like this,” says Professor Matsushita. “Since medical care is not usually able to provide 100% satisfaction to patients, the attitude toward oneself is less strict. For example, at the beginning, I wondered whether we could achieve high levels of hand hygiene, but JCI let us know that patients clearly want it.”

Talking with surveyors through interpreters, some staff had eye-opening experiences. The surveyors’ perspective could be very different from traditional Japanese perspectives. “Honestly, there were times where we thought, ‘Why do we have to do this or that?’” says Professor Kodera. “Through JCI requirements, we came to understand how we can ensure patient safety and what the world’s best in class professionals do concerning patient safety.”

“Most medical providers are highly educated professionals and each is proud, especially in a national university hospital,” Professor Matsushita adds. “I certainly think there were some doctors who looked at this challenge activity with a cold stare. We struggled with getting them to accept IPSG. But by letting them understand the importance of these guidelines, little by little, like chanting a sutra, in the end they understood it.”

### **Maintaining a high level of quality and safety**

Keeping up with JCI standards requires continuous effort too. According to Professor Matsushita, “The three-year look back is tough but it keeps us from losing motivation.” He continues:

“We realize that leading edge clinical research institutions overseas follow this drive for basic hospital quality and safety, and that such quality is strictly reviewed by the Joint Commission in the US. High quality medical services and research outcomes are obtained through continuous improvement of hospital quality, and we want to be a medical institution that attracts attention from patients all over the world.”

Receiving accreditation on the JCI standards has also led to greater awareness of the staff’s role in patient safety. The IPSG standards focus on everything in the hospital including facilities, personnel, governance, security and so on, not just clinical care. Professor Matsushita points out: “I think the staff are encouraged to realize that medical care is provided not only by the doctors but also by the collaboration of all staff – and that JCI reviews that collaboration process.”

JCI-required facility standards are also very high. Although it was a challenge on the financial front, the cost of this investment can be considered as an up-front investment for risk avoidance and to enhance risk management, so I think it will lead to savings on a long-term basis,” Professor Matsushita concludes.

### **Fulfilling their mission of internationalization**

“It is a great honor to be accredited and it helps fulfill our mission,” says Professor Seiichi Matsuo, President of Nagoya University. “As a national academic medical center, we focus on developing knowledge and skills. JCI standards and policies that are learned by our staff and students will also have a positive impact when these skilled students and staff become practitioners who deliver quality care and patient safety beyond Nagoya University.”

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