

# How they “change”: health consumers in Japan

Yukiko Sakai, Chihiro Kunimoto, Keiko Kurata

Keio University, Tokyo, JAPAN

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate both the latest health care consumers’ needs for information and their information seeking behavior in Japan.

We then compare these results with the results of similar surveys administered in Japan in 2000<sup>[1]</sup> and in the U.S. in 2006<sup>[2]</sup>.

## Methods

We administered a questionnaire to 1,200 individuals in Japan between the ages of 15 and 79 in a randomized, population-based, door-to-door survey in November 2008. We selected the respondents through a commercial survey service that created a demographic sample based on residential region, city size, gender, and age.

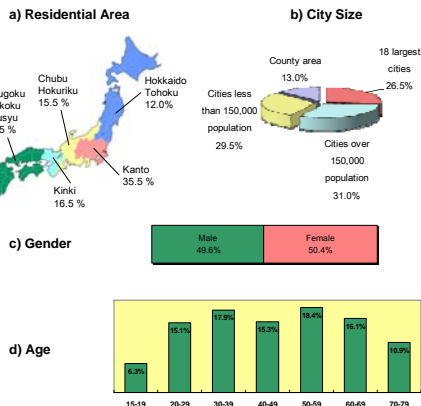
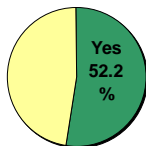


Figure 1. Sample Distribution n=1,200

The survey consisted of seven questions relating to the subjects’ experiences with health information seeking and the details of that experience.

### 1) Experience

Slightly more than half (52.2%) of the participants had actively sought health information during the previous two years.



### 2) Topic

Most seekers looked for information on a “specific disease” (79.4%).

Topic	%
Disease	79.4%
Doctors hospitals	52.8%
Drugs	49.6%
Treatment & surgery	45.6%
Exercise and fitness	23.3%
Health insurance and cost	19.4%
Nutrition, diet therapy	17.6%
Mental health	16.7%
Alternative medicine	9.4%

(n=540, multiple answer)

A strong need for the information on a “specific disease” is similar to the previous studies:

- for patients in Japan in 2000 (68%);
- for the internet health information seekers in US in 2006 (64%).

### 3) Source

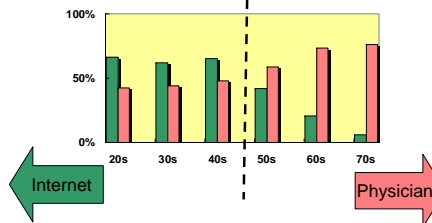
Source	%
Physicians	57.0%
Internet	44.3%
Book	27.8%
Brochure	26.7%
Lay person	24.6%
Newspaper	17.0%
TV/Radio	14.3%
Pharmacists	13.1%
Magazine	12.6%

(n=540, multiple answer)

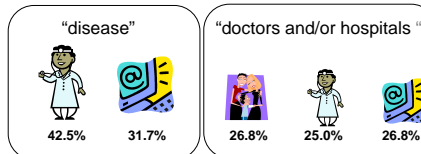
“physicians” (57.0%) is still respondents’ first choice as an information source, while the “Internet” (44.3%) gained greater popularity as a resource compared to the results of the earlier Japanese survey from 2000(10%).

Internet: 4 times (1) higher  
Cf. Internet diffusion rate in Japan from 2000 to 2008<sup>[3]</sup> 37.1% → 75.3% (2 times)

### 4) Source by age

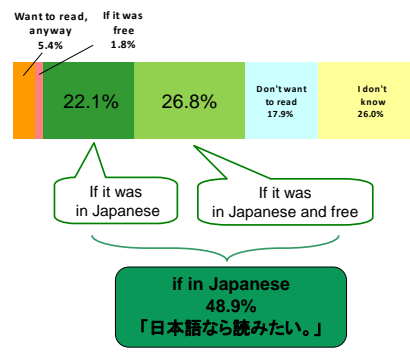


### 5) Source by topic



### 6) Willingness to read scientific articles

Unexpectedly, half of the participants responded that they were willing to read clinical articles if they were written in Japanese (48.9%).



## Conclusions

The evidence indicates that Japanese consumers are seeking health information in a proactive manner more relying on the Internet than in previous years. These consumers would like to read clinical research in their native language.

## Literature cited

- [1] Yamaguchi N et al. [Information needs survey for patients and their family] In: *Kosei Kagaku Kenkyuho Hojokin Iryo Gijutsu Hyoka Sogo Kenkyu Jigyo: Nihon niokeru EBM notameno detabesu kochiku oyobi teikyo riyu ni kansuru Chosa Kenkyu: Heisei 12 nendo Sokatsu / Buntan kenkyu hokokusho*. Tokyo: the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2001. p.19-35.
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## For further information

Please contact:  
Yukiko Sakai, MSIS, JHIP  
Head, Public Services  
Shinanomachi Media Center, Keio University  
(Kitasato Memorial Medical Library)  
35 Shinanomachi Shinjuku, Tokyo 160-8582 JAPAN  
phone +81-3-5363-3725 / fax +81-3-5363-3859  
yukiko@lib.keio.ac.jp

Chihiro Kunimoto, MLS, Research Assistant,  
chihirok@slis.keio.ac.jp

Keiko Kurata, MLS, Professor,  
keiko@slis.keio.ac.jp  
School of Library and Information Science, 慶應義塾  
Keio University