
[5]Panel discussion

[5-1]Being ill in a risk society: Patient narratives on the management of uncertainty

*Rika Sakuma Sato¹, Maho Isono², Setsuko Sugano³ (1. DIPEX-Japan(Japan), 2. International University of Health and Welfare(Japan), 3. Rikkyo University(Japan))

Presentation language : Japanese

“Kyuni-guaiga-warukunaru” (“When you suddenly get sick”) is a title of a book, based on the correspondence between a philosopher suffering cancer and an anthropologist. In the book, the two women exchange their ideas about the contingencies of life, the risk management, and the “fateful” decision making.

This panel discussion is inspired by their exchanges regarding the predicament that today’ s patient must face when medical professionals deliver information hoping that she/he would make a rational decision based on the evidential information they provide. In contemporary society, individuals are held responsible for managing risks which can only be identified by experts (Giddens1990; Beck 1992). However, individuals often resist experts’ assessment of the risk and their advice when they try to manage their uncertainty. The dichotomy between “rational” and “irrational” is not productive here. We need to analyze how individuals mobilize resources such as trust or hope which are nurtured within their experience-based knowledge.

We begin the panel discussion with the presentation of audiovisual narratives taken from the Database of Health and Illness Narratives compiled by DIPEX-Japan, followed by two panelists’ (Setsuko Sugano, a sociologist, and Maho Isono, the anthropologist who co-authored the book mentioned above) discussion on patient strategies for managing uncertainty in a risk society.