

Issue 25

The future of COVID-19

Tuesday, April 28

Hello. This is Kohno Shigeru, the President of Nagasaki University.

In the last two issues I talked about COVID-19 using the example of grass and fire. In this issue I will discuss the future of COVID-19 in Japan and Nagasaki.

At present, coronavirus infections are gradually increasing in Japan. A state of emergency has been declared, the movement of people has decreased, and every region's efforts to stop COVID-19 become important. In areas where fires are burning, the fires should be extinguished, while in the areas where fires are not burning, it's important to prevent fire from entering.

In large cities in Japan where COVID-19 is spreading, people are gradually understanding the importance of changes in our behavior. It takes time for the measures to take effect but we hope that in time they will bring the virus under control.

In Nagasaki some fires are burning now (April 28) and currently we can control the spread of the virus. We do not need to have the same measures in areas where there are many fires burning. However, travel has not been completely stopped.

It's important that we are careful to refrain from inviting fire in or taking fire out to others. If the fire becomes large there will be many severe cases of infection and Nagasaki's medical capacity may be overwhelmed. To avoid this situation, please do not travel and do not invite others to visit as much as possible. With everyone's effort we should be able decrease the number of infections within one to two months.

What happens after this? First, it's necessary to suppress the fires in Japan. Even when we have stopped the large fires, most of the grass will remain unburned. If fires start again, we will return to the same situation. Until all the fires are put out and the invisible embers are extinguished, it's dangerous to return to the same lifestyle we had before COVID-19. Before we return to our previous lifestyle, we should be patient and remember each individual action is important.

Once the domestic fires are no longer burning, the embers are removed, and domestic activities have restarted, what about international activities? If embers remain outside of Japan, there will probably be limits on international exchange. We must avoid inviting new sparks from overseas. How we will manage this new international arrangement will be discussed.

A revolutionary fire extinguisher (remedy) will possibly be developed. Also the development of fire-resistant clothing (vaccine) is another strong possibility. In any case, it will take some time.

Finally, I would like to add one more example that is difficult to explain using the grass and fire metaphor. In this more complicated case, if sparks fall on to grass that has not yet burned, although it appears that the grass has not burned, the grass has in fact burned. There are people who have been infected with the virus but never show signs of that infection.

If another fire starts what will happen to the grass? Will it be OK? At this point we cannot say with any certainty what will happen. Usually if something does not burn there should be fire resistance (“immunity”). However, it seems that some people do not acquire immunity for some reason. We will have to wait for the results of research.

In the last three issues I have talked about COVID-19 using the metaphor of grass and fire. Now it’s important to get through this challenging moment. It’s inconvenient living with many restrictions on our lives but together I think we can overcome these hardships

PS

My previous emails have been translated into English. Use the link and password below. Please share with our international faculty and staff as well as colleagues at overseas stations.

<https://nudrive.nagasaki-u.ac.jp/public/mrxcwAXKLQaAelcBzYxweSzMgcMWItqZgoITjHOPoHOU>

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