

Intention for Disaster Evacuation of Community-dwelling Older Adults in Japan: A Pilot Study

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Background

Elderly individuals tend to have age-related disaster vulnerability. In climate-related disasters that occurred between 2019 and 2020 in Japan, 60–70% of the victims were older adults.

Aim

This study aimed to clarify the intention for disaster evacuation and its associated factors among community-dwelling older adults in Japan.

Methods

We recruited 91 older adults who were members of health volunteer groups or elderly clubs in a disaster-prone town during Sep.–Oct. 2021. We conducted a self-administered questionnaire survey that included demographic information, social capital index, disaster literacy, disaster preparedness, and intention for disaster evacuation. A bivariate analysis was conducted to examine the factors associated with disaster evacuation behavior. This research was approved by the Ethics Review Board of Kobe University (No. 1024).

Results

We received 65 survey responses; the average age of the respondents was 73.3 years, approximately 80% were female, over 90% were living with someone and physically independent, and more than 50% had decided where to evacuate. Intention to evacuate was significantly associated with reciprocity of social capital components, including receiving and giving emotional support, familiarity with evacuation places, knowledge of evacuation routes and time, conversations about disaster preparedness with family members, and preparing evacuation bags ($p < .05 \sim .01$).

Conclusions and implications

The findings suggest that emotional support to or from others may encourage older adults to consider evacuation. It is important for older adults to have a concrete image of emergency situations and for community nurses to facilitate the development of personal evacuation plans.