The Atomic Bombing and the Medical Care
From Relief Activities to Medical Surveys

Chuta Tamagawa (right), performing autopsy in the temporary autopsy room set up at Hiroshima Post and Telecommunications Hospital
October 11, 1945   Photo by Shunkichi Kikuchi   Courtesy of Harumi Tago

Free Admission

Period: March 25, 2022 – September 12, 2022
Place: Special Exhibition Room, East Building 1F, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

COVID-19 UPDATE: For the latest opening status of the museum, please check our website.
During the war, doctors and other medical personnel were obliged to cooperate in the war effort under various laws and regulations. The Air Defence Law required doctors to engage in relief activities in the event of an air raid. As air raids by the U.S. military on the Japanese mainland intensified, doctors were on standby at relief stations each time an alarm was issued.

When the city of Hiroshima was devastated by the atomic bombing, it became difficult to carry out the relief activities that had initially been planned; however, the surviving doctors treated victims despite their own injuries. Units belonging to the Army Marine Headquarters (known as the “Akatsuki” Corps) stationed in Ujina and rescue teams that had rushed to the area from different regions of the country were engaged in relief activities. Victims were taken in hospitals and schools in the surrounding areas.

As the days passed, the doctors who treated the victims were faced with radiation-related symptoms. At first, it was not even known that an atomic bomb had been dropped, but the surveys conducted immediately after the bombing helped the doctors seek effective methods of treatment.

Meanwhile, the United States also conducted investigations on the effects of the atomic bomb on human bodies. A Japan-U.S. Joint Commission was organized and conducted a survey in Hiroshima from October to November, and the reports were compiled the following year.

This exhibition traces events relevant to the atomic bombing and medical care through the items of the collection of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, photographs taken at the time, records left by doctors, and other materials. We hope that this exhibition will serve as an opportunity for visitors to learn about the struggles of the doctors of that time. They committed to treating the victims and getting the picture of the patients' symptoms under the difficult situation with inadequate equipment or medical supplies.

Contents:
1. Medical System in Wartime:
   - War Mobilization of Medical Personnel
2. Dropping of the Atomic Bomb:
   - Relief and Rescue Activities amid Turmoil
3. Gradual Onset of the Symptoms Caused by Radiation
4. Survey Activities by Atomic Bomb Survey Teams

"Treatment of Burns," a manual about how to treat burns caused by air raids   March–August 1945   Donated by Ken Mitsumoto
"Reports on Atomic Bomb Medical Treatment," a record about the atomic bombing by Chojiro Tsutsumi, a self-employed doctor in Hiroshima City Donated by Mitsuko Tsutsumi
"Transcriptions of the Death Certificates," a series of transcriptions of the death certificates prepared by Masami Onaka, a self-employed doctor in Toyama Village, Asa County Collection of Toshifumi Onaka
Autopsy on an atomic-bomb victim performed by Chuta Tamagawa, professor at Hiroshima Prefectural Specialty School of Medicine   October 11, 1945
Doctors of Japan-U.S. Joint Commission that conducted a massive medical survey in Hiroshima   October–November 1945   Photo by the U.S. Military
Ushita Elementary School where Kyoto Imperial University Survey Team provided victims with treatment   Around September 10–20, 1945
Collection of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences

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March 2022   Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum