

# THE NEWZ

English Ver.

# 05

March 2023



## Differences Between **Japanese** And **Foreign** Healthcare Systems

From The Perspective Of University Students Studying Abroad



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Location: Greenwich Park, London, UK Photographer: Kanna Yamazaki

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## A b o u t T h e N e w Z

The Japanese have had opportunities to enjoy medical care under the universal health insurance system. However, with the declining birthrate and aging population, the burden of social security costs on the younger generation is expected to increase, and the corona disaster has revealed the weak points of Japan's healthcare system. Therefore, there is a growing need to review it. In addition, the voices of patients are less likely to be reflected in healthcare policies and the number of young people who desire to participate in the design of the healthcare system is increasing.

Considering the current situation, Institute for New Era Strategy (INES) and Japan Counselors (JC) have decided to publish a monthly report to provide an opportunity for young people to think about the future of the social security, medical insurance system, and the healthcare system.

Students studying abroad will gather information on episodes that symbolize the differences between the local healthcare system and the Japanese healthcare system, and write reports in both Japanese and English.

The title, "The NewZ," was created with the "Generation Z" in mind. The NewZ is a newsletter whose entire process, from project launch to writing and editing, has been performed by "Generation Z" college students.

We hope that you will have an interest in the healthcare system of your generation and the future.



Japanese Ver.

# The different perspectives toward nourishment and supplement between the U.S. and Japan

**Kana Hashizume**

Lindenwood University, United States



Since it is harder to obtain necessary nutrition in the U.S. than in Japan, many people take nutritional supplements to get what they cannot take from daily food. A lot of my friends take at least one supplement daily. This article talks about supplements from the Japanese and U.S. perspectives.

As many people know, the U.S. does not have a national health insurance program, unlike Japan. In Japan, citizens can see a doctor whenever they have a health concern, and the costs for treatment are much less than in the U.S. Due to the high healthcare expenses in the U.S., citizens tend to avoid visiting hospitals by having strong mindsets of maintaining

good health. This is why people in the U.S. care more about their health than Japan.

How many people take at least one supplement in the U.S. and Japan? In 2019, more than 77% of the U.S. citizens consumed supplements, while 30% of Japanese men and 38% of Japanese women took supplements. Before coming to the U.S., I did not see many friends who took supplements to obtain necessary nutrition, so I was surprised that most people consume at least one supplement daily in the U.S. I have not taken any supplements in the long term yet, but since I eat fast food almost every day, I need to take care about my health seriously.

## How supplements are certified to sell in drug stores

In a previous article, I discussed the role of the Food Drug Administration (FDA) in overseeing production of generic medicine. The institution is involved in supplements as well. However, when manufacturers sell supplements, the dietary supplements do not need to be approved by FDA since supplements are concerned as food. Instead, supplement manufacturers need to be responsible for the safety

of their own products. To that end the FDA mandates that supplement manufacturers comply with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), which audits the quality of supplements. If FDA finds non-safe dietary supplements, they demand to remove the products from stores or suspend sales of the products to the manufacturers.

## Variety of Supplement

Like other drugs, U.S. drug stores have a variety of supplements, including ones that people cannot buy without a prescription in Japan. I was surprised to find a gummy type of Melatonin supplement. In Japan, individuals need to see a doctor when they want Melatonin. In the U.S.; however, people can buy it in drug stores. I personally think Melatonin is the

most famous supplement because many of my friends take it. Melatonin is used to improve the quality of sleep. When individuals have a sleep issue, they take Melatonin. Melatonin does not harm the human body, but if people take it in the long term, they might not be able to stop using it when they sleep. Some people think they cannot sleep without it, so doctors

do not recommend them to use it often. Because people can purchase supplements without prescriptions from pharmacists, we have to be responsible to determine how much we should take. According to my friend who took Melatonin for almost a year, it is greatly effective for enhancing sleeping quality without being dependent on it. Moreover, there are a lot of supplements which consider

vegan, allergy, and gluten-free.

Also, the size of market supplement companies in the U.S. is four times larger than Japanese ones. In 2022, the supplement market size was about \$35.6 billion in the U.S. On the other hand, the market size in Japan was about \$13.72 billion.

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Category

- Vitamins (80)
- Health & Medicine (36)
- Baby & Child (1)
- Beauty (1)

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- Buy 1, Get 1 Free (18)
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- Sale \$11.99 (3)

Brand

Find a brand

- CVS Health (19)

Showing 1-20 of 88 products

Product Name	Price	Offer	Rating
CVS Health Melatonin Gummies for Sleep Support, 150 CT	\$19.49	Buy 1, Get 1 Free - Add 2 or more to qualify	81
Sundown Melatonin Gummies, 150 CT	\$16.99	SAVE \$3.00	18
CVS Health Melatonin Gummies, 60CT	\$14.99	Buy 1, Get 1 Free - Add 2 or more to qualify	55
CVS Health Great Tasting Melatonin Gummy Sleep Aid	\$8.49	Buy 1, Get 1 Free - Add 2 or more to qualify	94

Melatonin gummies sold in the United States

## Vegan

Another positive aspect of supplements is that supplements are good for human skin. In the U.S., vegans and vegetarians are more common than in Japan, and despite not eating meat or fish, they have good clear

smooth skin. My mother told me that because vegans and vegetarians take a lot of supplements, they have good condition to their skin.

## Health

I was also surprised that many people care about their health seriously. Even though some people are not athletes, many individuals go to a gym daily. I was also shocked that there was a big salad sold for about \$10. Chick-fil-a, a famous U.S. fast food store, has a large salad containing chicken, fruits, and vegetables. The salad is five times bigger than a salad that Japanese McDonald's has. Even though the salad is a little bit

expensive, it has a lot of nutrition, so I have been trying to eat it at least once a week. Lastly, because of the costly insurance in the U.S, citizens have to take care of their health carefully, but I believe it is a positive aspect because even though Japan has a variety of food and people can take a lot of nutrition, it is impossible to obtain all necessary nutrition.



# Recognition for depression

**Kanna Yamazaki**

Working in London ( Kanazawa University)



Good afternoon. The theme of this report is "depression". To be honest, I struggled to decide whether to deal with this topic, as I have had my own painful experiences regarding depression. First of all, let me tell you a little about my background: when I was 17, my mother, who had suffered from depression for a long time, passed away. After that, my grandmother and my aunt also suffered from severe depressions in a row, and both of them went to the hospital and were even hospitalized for months at a time when their symptoms were severe.

## Depressing and depression

First, I would like to explore my interpretation of the definition of depression based on information published by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare in Japan. Depression is one of the mood disorders and refers to a condition in which mental symptoms such as feeling depressed all day long and not being able to enjoy anything, as well as physical symptoms such as having disorder of sleep, lack of appetite and tiredness, which all cause serious problems in daily life. In other words, the person is unmotivated to do the minimum necessary activities of human life, such as sleeping and eating. In addition, the causes of depression are not clearly known, but it is often considered to be a complex condition. For example, when I arrived in London, everything around me was new. Everything must have been stressful, including the language differences, the weather differences, the school environment, the visa approval process, or even getting on the train. However, although I was temporarily feeling 'depressed', I never thought

## Differences in perception

I would like to talk about the differences in perception of depression between Japan and the

UK. Although I have never suffered from depression, I believe that everyone can become depressed at some point in their lives when they face problems and hardships. I, too, was feeling depressed in the first few months in London, when I was troubled by the gap between the ideals and reality, and was disappointed that my life was not going as well as I would have imagined. As I have seen people who have suffered from depression in my own life, I thought I might have something to share with you.

that I had 'depression,' mental disease. How can the two be distinguished? There are two criteria for determining this: the severity of the symptoms, including the number and duration of symptoms, and whether the symptoms interfere with daily life. Depression tends to be diagnosed when a person has a high number of symptoms that meet the diagnostic criteria for depression, they have lasted for more than two weeks, and they are interfering with daily life. According to this criteria, since I was feeling depressed for more than months after I came to the UK, it means that I had 'depression' at that time. To be honest, I was surprised. At the time, I assumed that it was perfectly normal to feel anxious about alien life, so my symptoms did not persist for a long time or become severe.

The fact that you are diagnosed with 'depression' after only two weeks of symptoms is probably a rule to prevent more prolonged symptoms and an irretrievable mental state. This means that if you think you might be depressed, it is important to see a doctor or clinic as soon as possible.

UK that I have realized while living in London. Please note that this is based solely on my experience

and could be different from the truth. In Japan, I believe that many people cannot talk to anyone about having depression. This is what I think based on my experience of seeing a number of people who have actually suffered from the condition nearby. They tend to be hesitant to let even their closest family members know that they are suffering from depression. In the UK, I think it is the contrary: people with depression or mental health problems often let those around them know in advance. A British friend of mine who actually has symptoms of depression informed me of her mental health and said that she would share it with her family and other friends. She also told me: "I need to let them know about it in advance, otherwise, they might be surprised or upset if I suddenly feel down or depressed". What I found out from this is that there is still a strong prejudice against mental illness in Japan compared to Western countries. This may be because of the culture in Japan, where everyone is expected to be diligent and hard-working. In the UK, there have been workers' strikes every week since the outbreak of COVID-19.

In my opinion, the environment where you can raise your voice to raise wages cannot be found in Japan and it is a wonderful thing. The underground strikes for example are inconvenient as it interferes with life, however, for the sake of workers' wages, I thought it was something that had to be done. Nevertheless, from the local people's point of view, there seems to be a strong perception that the weekly strikes are more about laziness, not wanting to go to work, rather than for a pay rise. In Japan, it is very difficult to take time off because everyone thinks taking a holiday is causing troubles to your colleagues and bosses. This 'diligent' culture might be the reason why prejudice against mental illness remains so strong. That said, not everyone in the UK has an understanding of depression. However, compared to Japan, people are more tolerant of depression and less likely to have a negative image of it. I sincerely hope that Japan will become a society where prejudice against depression disappears with more understanding of people.



### JUST TALKING CAN HELP

NHS talking therapies can help you if you're struggling to cope with feelings of anxiety or depression. They're effective, and confidential. Your GP can refer you or you can refer yourself online [nhs.uk/talk](https://nhs.uk/talk)



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[Photo] Advertisement for depressed patients in the NHS

# Differences between Covid-19 vaccine passport applications in France and Japan

Miu Sukegawa

Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, France



Since the outbreak of Covid-19, governments around the world have had to take several actions such as securing the supply of vaccines to prevent the spread of the pandemic. One of their actions includes the provision and dissemination of the Vaccine Passport. Recognising that vaccine passports are essential for the resumption of economic activity, the EU started issuing the EU Digital Covid Certificate (otherwise known as the Hygiene Pass or Green Pass) in paper

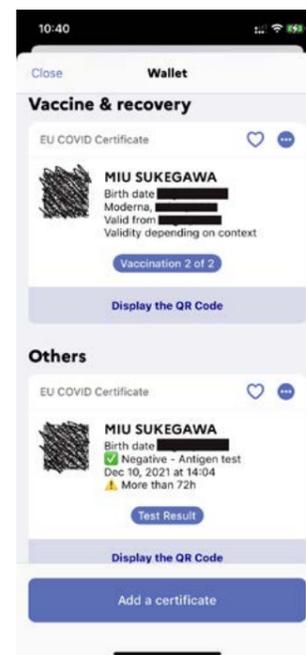
## Vaccine Passport Apps in France

In France, as aforementioned, there is an app developed by the French Government called TousAntiCovid, which manages digital certificates related to Covid-19 (vaccination certificates, negative certificates for PCR and antigen tests, and certificates of recovery from Covid-19 infection). When you are vaccinated or tested negative at a pharmacy, a paper version of the EU Digital Covid Certificate is issued. The document contains personal details such as name, date of birth, details of the vaccine or test result, and a QR code. When this QR code is read by TousAntiCovid, the certificate (QR code and the above personal information) is registered in the app and can be presented at any time as a vaccine passport.

[Fig. 1] Screenshot from TousAntiCovid

In France, the presentation of the vaccine passport was mandatory until 14 March 2022. When entering a restaurant, one must open TousAntiCovid and present his/her QR code. The waiter then scans the QR code on a special terminal and when the terminal glows green, you can enter the restaurant. The Vaccine Passport is also necessary when using public transport for long-distance journeys. For

and digital media around June 2020. Furthermore, given the high penetration rate of smartphones, smartphone apps were used to store the digital version of the vaccine passport. In France, the app is called TousAntiCovid, and in Germany, CovPass-App. Although the apps differ between countries, they all store the EU Digital Covid Certificate, a standardized certificate, hence, they can be used anywhere in the EU.



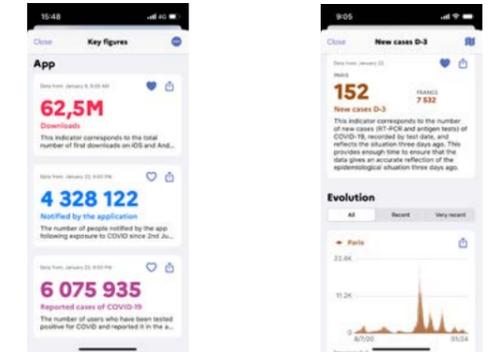
example, when travelling to Greece, I had to submit a screenshot or pdf of my Vaccine Passport when booking my flight. Furthermore, when taking the TGV (similar to Shinkansen in Japan) to Belgium, after holding up the ticket barcode at the ticket gate, I had to open TousAntiCovid and have the QR code scanned by the staff.

## Functions other than Vaccine Passport

In addition to the storage of Vaccine Passports, TousAntiCovid has several other functions, such as displaying the latest statistics related to the spread of Covid-19. As can be seen from the screenshot, on the app you can refer to the number of infections, vaccinations, severe cases, deaths, positivity rates and various other indicators.

[Fig. 2] [Fig. 3] Screenshots from TousantiCovid

Moreover, the user is also able to receive notifications from the app if he/she is eligible for vaccine boosters (those who have been vaccinated for more than six months after their second vaccination). The user can search for the nearest vaccine center by simply entering a postcode on the app. In this way,



TousAntiCovid functions as a so-called 'comprehensive' app against the Covid-19 pandemic. TousAntiCovid's UI design, which does not seem to have been created by a government with a rigid image, is also an attractive feature. It has a high penetration rate, with more than 62.5 million downloads as of end-January 2023.

## Advantages and disadvantages of Japanese and French apps

The "Covid-19 Vaccination Certificate App" stores vaccination certificates in Japan; like TousAntiCovid, it can present and read vaccination certificates, but in addition, the user can apply for and issue vaccination certificates from the app, which in France can only be done in pharmacies. However, to do so, you need your My Number Card, the PIN of My Number Card, and your passport. The penetration rate of the My Number Card was 57.1% at the end of December 2022, which is not very high, and the app penetration rate is significantly lower than in France, with approximately 18 million users, as of the end of January 2023.

Nevertheless, the use of a My Number Card has the advantage that the identification is more robust. France's TousAntiCovid is not equipped with a mechanism to check that the QR code read actually belongs to the person using the app, which has led to problems with QR code trafficking and misuse. For example, since France does not approve Chinese vaccines, Chinese friends who got Chinese vaccines could not issue an EU Digital Covid Certificate and thus had to buy QR codes from others or share them between friends.

Although the Japanese app prevents any misuse, it has the disadvantage that foreign tourists and temporary Japanese residents who do not have a My Number Card or a Japanese resident card cannot use the app.

This is because when issuing the certificate on the app, whether or not the vaccination has been given to the person is only checked against the domestic database linking the resident card and vaccination record, and not against overseas vaccination record databases. Therefore, students such as myself who were vaccinated twice in Japan and then went abroad to study and received the third vaccination abroad can only be issued with a vaccination certificate for up to the second vaccination.

In this report, we were able to observe some of the French and Japanese governments' Covid-19 measures in terms of the development of the Vaccine Passport app. Although there are both good and bad points to these apps, the fact remains that both apps were created with the cooperation of numerous people in order to prevent the spread of infection and protect the health of the citizens. Furthermore, the development of the apps has also allowed us to see the synergy between healthcare and digital technology. While contact tracking apps have failed in both countries, through strong collaboration between health authorities and developers, and improved usability based on an understanding of national characteristics, I do not doubt that more cases of a combination between healthcare and digital technology will come in the future.

# Synthetic Drugs for Medical Purposes in Australia

Tanji Itsuki

Monash University, Malaysia



## Introduction

In Japan, synthetic drugs such as marijuana, MDMA, and magic mushrooms are widely recognized as illegal drugs. In particular, in Japan, MDMA and magic mushrooms, unlike marijuana, are considered as chemicals that are synthesized illegally. Marijuana, on the other hand, is grown and harvested from seeds in nature and is not a chemical. For this reason, Western countries such as Australia, the U.S., and Canada have taken a relatively long-standing and tolerant stance. In addition, many countries have legalized medical marijuana because synthetic drugs, including

cannabis, are believed to be effective in treating diseases that are difficult to treat with current medical treatment. Recently, the neighboring countries of South Korea and Thailand have also legalized medical marijuana. In response to this trend, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare has decided to lift the ban on cannabis-based medicines in 2022. In this report, I am going to focus on Australia, which is one of the first countries in the world to approve the medical use of synthetic narcotics, and introduce the medical use of synthetic narcotics in detail.

## Australia: Legalization of Medical Marijuana

In Australia, the Narcotic Drugs Amendment Act 2016 was enacted in February 2016, legalizing the use of medical marijuana from October 2016. This amendment allows for the cultivation of medical cannabis for medical purposes and scientific research purposes within Australia. Moreover, patients were allowed to use medical marijuana only when diagnosed as necessary by a physician. In Australia, the use of medical marijuana is often prescribed for conditions involving chronic pain,

such as cancer, epilepsy, and multiple sclerosis. Although it is not specified for which disease or condition the medical marijuana should be prescribed, it is only prescribed for conditions for which a physician has determined that the use of medical marijuana is appropriate and effective. In fact, medical marijuana has a wide range of benefits, including pain relief, sedation, sleep, appetite stimulation, anticancer effects, and relief of intraocular pressure.



[Photo] Medical Marijuana Used in Australia

## Australia Legalization of MDMA and Magic Mushrooms for Medical Use

In February 2023, it was announced that MDMA (also known as "ecstasy") and psilocybin, which is found in a poisonous mushroom species called magic mushrooms, will be officially approved for medical use in Australia for the first time in the world. On February 3, 2023, the Drug and Medicines Administration (TGA) of the Department of Health, which is responsible for regulating medicines in Australia, announced that licensed psychiatrists will be able to prescribe MDMA

to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression from July 1. However, these substances will only be used in very limited ways. For example, only psychiatrists with a license will be allowed to prescribe these to patients and these psychiatrists must receive approval for their prescriptions from the Commission on Human Ethics. However, many experts warn that it will take time for these to be fully deployed.



[Photo] MDMA Legalized in Australia for Medical Purposes News

## Dependence on Medical Marijuana

Originally, morphine was prescribed to terminally ill cancer patients in many countries, including Australia. Morphine, like cannabis, is used to relieve intermittent pain. While it has some advantages, such as pain relief, it also has a disadvantage: Morphine is made out of opium, which is the coagulated juice of the mustard plant and is highly addictive. Medical marijuana is

therefore attracting attention as an alternative to morphine as a painkiller. Medical marijuana can be prescribed specifically for symptoms, such as to facilitate the improvement of specific diseases by changing the medicinal ingredients contained and their ratios. This allows patients to focus on treatment in a safe and secure manner.

## Problems with Medical Marijuana in Australia

Although the government has decided to legalize medical marijuana, various problems are yet to be resolved. There are still many medical professionals who question the efficacy of medical marijuana on the human body. Other issues include that there is a public opinion that the legalization of medical marijuana has been a foregone conclusion, as it has not been decided how medical marijuana will actually be operated

and managed in the future. Unfortunately, there will always be people who want to obtain it for illicit use, because the ingredients of medical marijuana are the same as those of cannabis, which is not approved for recreational use in Australia. The Australian medical system to ensure that medical marijuana is being used by the patients who really need it is currently in a fragile state.

## Conclusion

Personally, I am in favor of the legalization of medical marijuana. In fact, there have been many cases where medical marijuana has been effective in treating chronic illnesses such as depression. In response to

this, various countries, including Japan, are working towards legalization. As long as there are people who can be saved by these new efforts, I believe that we cannot afford not to approve legalization.

# [ Members ]



## Kana Hashizume

Lindenwood University in Missouri

I hope many people will be interested in the medical program differences between Japan and the U.S. Thank you for reading!

## Yuika Ikeda

University of Washington

I am very happy to make the first newsletter.



## Yamazaki Kanna

Working in London(Gap year from Kanazawa university)

I also work on the layout and design of The NewZ.

## Miu Sukegawa

Sciences Po Paris

Re-learned the importance of health insurance.  
I sincerely ask both countries to digitize the enrollment process though.



## Itsuki Tanji

Monash University Malaysia

I'm happy to be able to communicate regarding the healthcare system in Malaysia, which is a minor country. From now on, I will also be transmitting other countries' information about healthcare systems.



## Moe Okagawa

Hakodate University

I am pleased to be involved in The NewZ project as an editorial staff member. I hope this newsletter will spark your interest in the healthcare system in Japan and around the world.

