

# Challenges in Awareness-Raising Initiatives Regarding Dementia for the Public in a Rural Area of Japan

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## Abstract

With the increasing number of patients with dementia, strategies for raising the awareness of the general public have gained high levels of interest. Each community in each country presents its unique socio-economic and cultural features in facing this challenge; therefore, such strategies need to be determined in light of its indigenous and autochthonous rooted issues. As a nation with the largest number of elderly population, Japan has been encountering several unprecedented issues regarding dementia, and the situation has tended to be exacerbated in rural areas with high proportions of elderly individuals. Employing the case study approach, this study highlights Tokushima Prefecture, which is one of the rural regions in the country, and analyzes two practices of an awareness-raising campaign regarding dementia conducted by the author and a few volunteers. The first is for adults, and the second is for children. The findings reveal the following. The difficult aspects of the first initiative are consolidating the diverse viewpoints of adults with various backgrounds and determining the ideal next stage. In addition, a strong historical tradition related to stigma or the culture of shame exists in Japan. In the initiative for children, the most difficult lies in publicity, because the word *dementia* is unfamiliar for the majority of the children, and many young parents tend to hide this information from children. These limitations are indicative of future challenges: identifying/promoting the next step, addressing the culture of shame in stigma, attracting potential participants, and making contents more effective and appealing, among others.

**Keywords:** awareness-raising, children, dementia, elderly population, the public