

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## **Japan looks to Tasmania for guidance with training of doctors**

Imagine what it would be like to be one of Japan's leading policy makers and educators in community-based general practice and family medicine following an earthquake, a nuclear power plant disaster, and a tsunami in your home country.

Professor Ryuki Kassai, from the Department of Community and Family Medicine at Fukushima Medical University, is a member of the board of directors of the Japan Primary Care Association (JPCA) and also acts as chair of the JPCA's committee for International Learning and Professional Development.

He will take part in a health forum and speak to staff and students at the **UTAS Rural Clinical School in Burnie on Monday 25 February**, about the health impacts of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Prof. Kassai will be accompanied by his wife, Dr Masako Li, who is a professor of health economics at the Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, and his trainee, Dr Koki Nakamura MD, a first year GP registrar with the Department of Community and Family Medicine at Fukushima Medical University, Fukushima.

The Rural Clinical School has an active Global Health Program and the chance to hear first-hand about the health impacts of such large-scale disasters and the research that has evolved has been welcomed by the school's associate head, Community Medical Education, Lizzie Shires.

"It is a unique experience for our staff and students to hear first-hand about the earthquake and nuclear disaster and how the area responded to the health threats and rebuilt itself," she said.

"We are pleased to be able to host our international visitors and share ideas about promoting health care in rural communities".

Six years ago Dr Kassai founded the first community-based university department of general practice in Japan at Fukushima Medical School and

every year he takes trainees to places that are considered to have the best general practice systems in the world.

His aim is to establish sound nation-wide systems of primary care in Japan, in particular the areas worst affected by natural and man-made disasters.

“Japan is one of a small number of countries in the world where general practice is not yet well developed,” he explained.

“These annual study tours have been excellent opportunities for my trainees to be exposed to general practice of a global standard and to motivate them to learn how it’s done.

“Dr Nakamura is hoping to set up a teaching practice in a rural village in Fukushima in the future and Tasmania was his first choice due to its reputation for excellence in general practice and rural health care.”

While in Tasmania, Dr Kassai will be touring the UTAS Rural Clinical School, visiting its students in NW nursing home placements and inspecting the Burnie Super Clinic, visiting the Launceston Clinical School to see the Patient Partnership Programme in action, and visiting health services in Hobart.

#### **Media opportunity:**

The media is invited to attend the RCS health forum, which includes a presentation at the UTAS Rural Clinical School, and then interview Prof. Kassai and Dr Koki Nakamura on site.

**WHEN:** Monday 25 February 2013. Forum 12.30-1.30pm. Interviews 1.30-2.30pm.

**WHERE:** UTAS Rural Clinical School, hospital campus, Brickport Rd, Burnie.

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#### **Information Released by:**

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#### **Biography - Prof. Ryuki Kassai**

Dr Kassai graduated from Hokkaido University School of Medicine, Sapporo, Japan in 1984, and took clinical trainings in paediatrics and paediatric neurology before going to Canada to serve as Resident in family practice at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

After completing his residency training including an elective study of the principles of family medicine under Professor Ian R. McWhinney, Dr Kassai went back to Japan and joined Kawasaki Medical School, Kurashiki, Japan in 1992 as Assistant Professor of primary care medicine.

In 1996 he moved to Hokkaido and became a founding Director and Chair of the Hokkaido Centre for Family Medicine (HCFM), and started in 1997 the first formal general practice/family medicine training programme in Japan.

After having made the HCFM a successful model of vocational training scheme, Dr Kassai moved to Fukushima (northeast of the main island of Japan) to found the first medical school department of community-based general practice/family medicine in Japan ever at Fukushima Medical University in March 2006.

Dr Kassai has been a member of the local and national advisory committees on EBM, primary care, community medicine, rural medicine, clinical education, and training of teachers.

Also, Dr Kassai has been a member of the editorial boards of *Asia Pacific Family Medicine* (WONCA Asia Pacific Region), the editorial advisory board of *British Medical Journal* (BMJ Group, London, UK), and the international advisory board of *British Journal of General Practice* (Royal College of General Practitioners, UK).

He authored and published the first Japanese textbook of family medicine in 2002, and the first Japanese clinical handbook of family practice in 2005.

For his international contribution to the discipline, the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) of the United Kingdom awarded him the honourable Membership of the RCGP (MRCGP) in November 2005, and Bond University of the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, the honourable Professorship in January 2009.

Married with two children, Dr Kassai enjoys travelling, *Onsen* hot springs, hiking, snow shoeing, cooking (Italian, Chinese, Japanese), reading, movie/*Kabuki* watching, and *Yuru* relaxation exercise.