National Hansen’s Disease Museum

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URL: http://www.hansen-dis.jp/

Information

Opening Hours: 9:30 - 16:30 [admission stops at 16:00]
Closed: Mondays (or Tuesday if Monday is a National Holiday), New Years holiday, the day following a national holiday, and museum re-arrangement days
Admission: Free
Access:
By Bus:
1. About 10 minutes by bus for Kumagaya station or Tokorozawa Station from Kiyose Station of Seibu Ikebukuro Line south exit
2. About 20 minutes by bus for Kiyose Station South East from Kumagaya Station of Seibu Shinjuku Line south exit

By Train:
About 20 minutes walking from Shin-Akitsu Station (JR Line) or Akitsu Station (Seibu-Bunkyo Line)

By Car:
About 30 minutes from Tokorozawa IC (Kan’etsu Expressway)

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About the National Hansen’s Disease Museum

1. Aim
The National Hansen’s Disease Museum was established as part of the national effort to erase the stigma associated with Hansen’s disease and to recover the honor of people afflicted by the disease by building public recognition and dissemination of correct information regarding this disease. The efforts are based on the “Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi Concerning a Swift and Comprehensive Solution to the Hansen’s Disease Issue,” the preamble and the eleventh article of the “Hansen’s Disease Compensation Law,” and the eighteenth article of the “Law on Promotion of Issues Related to Hansen’s disease.”

2. Missions
- To disseminate information on, and to promote awareness about Hansen’s disease.
- To erase stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion against people afflicted by the disease.
- To learn and teach from the long history of stigma and discrimination against Hansen’s disease with a focus on the isolation policy, and to narrate the sufferings, hardships, and legacies of people fighting against their fate.
- To recover the honor of those who have suffered difficulties and hardships due to Hansen’s disease, and to nurture the spirit of respect for human rights.
- To realize social integration of people affected by Hansen’s disease.

3. Functions
To educate and edify the public about Hansen’s Disease, to collect, preserve, and exhibit relevant information and artifacts, to conduct relevant research, and to act as an information center, and to plan, coordinate, and manage the activities of the museum.

4. History
On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Tofu Association, the “Prince Takamatsu Memorial Hansen’s Disease Museum” was established with a view to commemorating the lives of the people afflicted by Hansen’s disease, and in order to appeal to society never to repeat the wrongs of the past.

April 1996: Abolition of the Leprosy Prevention Law
May 2001: The plaintiffs were wholly the Kanagawa District Court’s favor in the unconstitutionality of the Leprosy Prevention Law. The state revised its right to appeal to a higher court and released a “Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi Concerning a Swift and Comprehensive Solution to the Hansen’s Disease Issue.” A plan for the expansion of the Prince Takamatsu Memorial Hansen’s Disease Museum was incorporated into this statement.

June 2001: The “Hansen’s Disease Compensation Law” was enforced.
March 2004: The plan for the expansion of the Prince Takamatsu Memorial Hansen’s Disease Museum was formalized by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare’s “Verification Committee Concerning the Hansen’s Disease Problem.”
April 2007: The Prince Takamatsu Memorial Hansen’s Disease Museum was reopened as the “National Hansen’s Disease Museum.”
April 2009: The “Law on Promotion of Issues Related to Hansen’s Disease” was enforced. Article 18 of this law advocates the “establishment of the National Hansen’s Disease Museum.”

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Permanent exhibits are based on three themes, 1. “The History of Hansen’s Disease” (Exhibition Room 1), 2. “The Leprosarium” (Exhibition Room 2), and 3. “Overcoming and Survival” (Exhibition Room 3). The museum hopes to offer visitors the key historical facts related to Hansen’s disease in Exhibition Room 1, and a feel for the lives of people affected by Hansen’s disease as human beings in Exhibition Rooms 2 and 3.

Exhibition Room 1 - “The History of Hansen’s disease”
This room offers an overview of the history of Hansen’s disease in Japan, centering on government policies.

Exhibition Room 2 - “The Leprosarium”
This room explores from nine different aspects the deplorable conditions under which patients of Hansen’s disease were forced to live in leprosaria before drugs to counter this disease were invented.

Exhibition Room 3 - “The proof of surviving”
This room exhibits images of people affected by Hansen’s disease who were able to find meaning in life despite the terrible fate to which they were condemned. It also offers visitors important information for creating a society in which People affected by Hansen’s disease can live without fear of stigma.

It may be difficult to fully appreciate this exhibition in one visit. We invite you to come back as often as you please to take a closer look at anything that touches you. It would make us extremely happy if, through our museum, we were able to show that no matter how one’s outward appearance may be disfigured by disease, all human beings have certain eternal and inviolable rights, and the need to be respected and cared for. We hope we can provide our visitors an opportunity to stop and ask themselves, “Am I capable of respecting and being considerate to my fellow human beings?”

The word “leprosy” has been associated with stigmas of various kinds in the past. For this reason, in order to protect the feelings of patients and their families, the term has been disused in favor of the term “Hansen’s disease.” The National Hansen’s Disease Museum, however, uses the term “leprosy” in its historical context in order to provide an honest picture of past discrimination and prejudices.

What is Hansen’s Disease:
- Hansen’s disease is a chronic infectious disease caused by Mycobacterium Leprae.
- Not all cases of Mycobacterium Leprae infection result in Hansen’s disease. Nowadays, only a few develop the disease.
- Not does the disease progress rapidly once contracted.
- The initial symptoms include skin patches and loss of sensation.
- Before drugs to counter Hansen’s Disease were invented, the disease often resulted in disfigurement and left disabilities even when cured.
- The disability and disfigurement often caused stigma and discrimination.
- Treatment is available now. With early detection and treatment, the disease can be cured with no disability.

The Permanent Exhibits

Exhibition Room 1 - The History of Hansen’s Disease
1. From ancient times to the Edo period
2. The beginning of Patient Detention
3. Intensification of quarantine
4. Chemotherapy and Movement of the Patients
5. Abolition of the Leprosy Prevention Law and the State Redress Suit

Exhibition Room 2 - The Leprosarium
1. Leprosy “Sentence” and Detention
2. Food, Clothing, and House in Leprosarium
3. Treatment for Leprosy
4. Patient’s work
5. Keeping order in sanatoria
6. Marriages, Sterilization, and Abortion
7. School in the Leprosarium
8. Prejudice from Society
9. Death in the Sanatorium

Exhibition Room 3 - The proof of surviving
1. From incurable to curable disease
2. Creating something to live for
3. A great advance in medical treatment
4. The present Hansen’s disease Sanatoria in Japan
5. The Hansen’s disease situation in foreign country
6. For establishment of a symbiotic relationship