

Never-Ending Battle Against Infectious Diseases

Tokyo iCDC is a network of experts who provide advice based on scientific evidence on infectious disease control measures of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

The Tokyo Center for Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control, known as Tokyo iCDC, was established in October 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic at the initiative of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG).

“Normally, a national center for infectious disease control is created by a country, but the fact that this system has been established by the TMG is quite a milestone,” said Tokyo iCDC Director Kaku Mitsuo.

The center has nine teams of experts as well as individual task forces, involving more than 80 experts.

“Tokyo iCDC is a virtual intelligence network that brings together experts in various areas of infectious diseases from all over Japan online,” Kaku explained. “It is a brand new, unprecedented organization.”

Since its establishment, Tokyo iCDC has, via the TMG’s monitoring conferences, analyzed relationships between the movement of people and the spread of

infection, while providing detailed information on mutant strains.

During the pandemic, the center also offered direct support at elderly care facilities and hospitals where mass infections occurred, while distributing brochures to residents to share information about COVID-19. “We were very active in information literacy and risk communications,” he recalled.

The TMG has established the “Tokyo Model” as a comprehensive health and medical care delivery system for COVID-19. The administration, medical institutions, the people of Tokyo, and experts from Tokyo iCDC have formed a united front to deal with the disease.

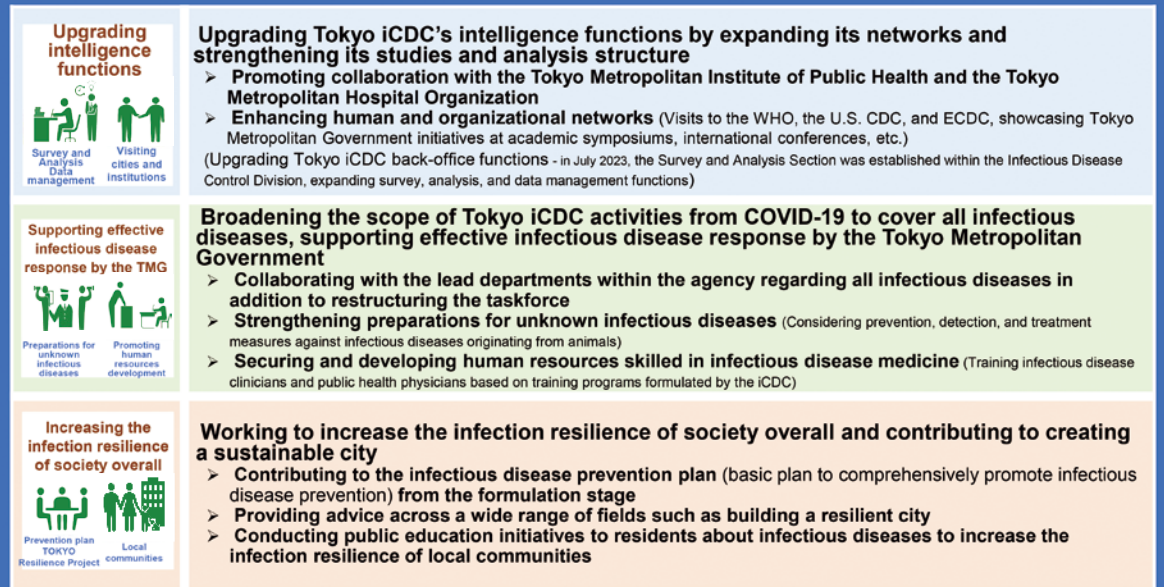
“Front-line experts fully engage in discussions with the TMG, and then present the results to citizens of Tokyo and to medical professionals,” he said. “The comprehensive response is a very important feature.



Tokyo iCDC Director Kaku during this interview

Pillars of Future Tokyo iCDC Initiatives

Tokyo iCDC advances its initiatives organized around the following three pillars in order to realize the vision of Tokyo being a city resilient against infectious disease



Pillars of Future Tokyo iCDC Initiatives

We believe this has led to Japan and Tokyo, along with New Zealand, having an extremely low mortality rate compared with other OECD members,” Kaku said in his evaluation of the Tokyo Model.

As COVID-19 was downgraded in May 2023 in Japan to class 5, the same level as seasonal influenza, the role of Tokyo iCDC has changed. “We are moving from contingency to normal circumstances,” he said. “We have faced a variety of challenges, so it is necessary to create a robust system during normal times,” he continued. “We must look ahead to the next pandemic.”

Tokyo iCDC currently has three pillars of future initiatives. The first is to upgrade its intelligence functions: the center will strengthen its study and analysis function as well as expand its networks. It will also cooperate with similar facilities at home and abroad, while introducing the TMG’s initiatives to academic conferences.

The second is to broaden the scope of its activities from COVID-19 to cover all infectious diseases. It will strengthen its preparations for unknown infectious diseases and work to secure and help develop human resources.

Thirdly, it aims to increase the infection resilience of society overall and contribute to creating a sustainable city. The center will advise the TMG on medium- and

long-term infection control measures and help boost awareness about infectious diseases in an effort to increase the infection resilience of local communities.

The TMG has also made efforts to disseminate information to travelers from overseas and foreign residents in the capital. “Tokyo is a cosmopolitan metropolis with some 700,000 people from other countries,” he said. The TMG sends out information not only in English but also in various other languages, while providing information to embassies in Tokyo. “We would like to provide the same kind of information not only within Japan but also to the rest of the world, and work to create a system that allows people to live a safe and secure life in Tokyo,” he said.

In order to achieve its objectives, the data and knowledge accumulated to date are regarded as significant assets. “We must not lose what we have gained over the past four years. The lessons learnt at the risk of life will be invaluable in the next step,” he said.

“Infectious diseases are an eternal challenge. There is no end to the battle. No one knows what will happen in the future. We will overcome these challenges through our network, which will also encourage people to work together with a spirit of caring for each other. That is the best vaccine. I am convinced that we can create a resilient society.”