

The Asian Young Dietitian Network: Growing and Collaborating Across Asia Dietitians

Special Report: AYDN Activities in Aomori, Japan

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The Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) was formally established on December 1, 2023, with a kickoff event at the Ajinomoto Co., Inc. Headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, attended by representatives from twelve countries. The network was created with the overarching aim of strengthening communication among dietitians across Asia, improving the region's nutritional status, and elevating the professional recognition and societal relevance of dietitians (1). Since its establishment, AYDN has gained increasing visibility and support from national dietetic organizations. AYDN has also initiated a collaborative comparative research project, "Exploring the Landscape of Nutrition and Dietetics Education Programs: A Comparative Study among AYDN Member Countries. Part 1: Curriculum Structures and Educational Inputs," which reflects the network's commitment to understanding differences in educational systems and to promoting evidence-based enhancements in dietetics training across Asia. This research theme served as a key point of discussion during subsequent AYDN activities, including the onsite meeting in Aomori.

AYDN's presence has been recognized across multiple professional platforms. Members were invited to deliver presentations at the 50th Anniversary of the Thai Dietetic Association (TDA) (2) and the 70th Anniversary of the Nutritionist-Dietitians Association of the Philippines (NDAP), where they introduced the network's objectives, achievements, and ongoing initiatives to international audiences. Furthermore, AYDN's contribution to global discussions was highlighted through participation in a panel session at the World Food Forum (WFF), hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), where an AYDN representative commented on the "Washoku view from out" (3). These activities have been reported in the Asian Journal of Dietetics reinforcing AYDN's growing role in the regional dietetics community.

In October 2025, representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam convened for an onsite AYDN meeting at Aomori University of Health and Welfare in Aomori, Japan. Situated in Eastern Japan, Aomori is characterized by its heavy snowfall, distinctive climate, rich cultural heritage, and well-known apple production. These regional features offered a unique context for examining how environmental, cultural, and agricultural factors shape dietetic practice and public nutrition programs. The site visits included the Aomori school lunch center, an elementary school, a hospital, a nursing home, and several university facilities. Observing these settings firsthand enabled participants to understand how dietitians in Japan operate within a well-organized system emphasizing hygiene management, nutrition education, standardized procedures, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The cultural environment of Aomori further enriched the educational experience. Members noted the influence of seasonal climate, local food traditions, and community agricultural practices particularly apple production on

dietary habits and nutrition policies. These observations provided a broader contextual understanding of how region-specific factors contribute to public health nutrition strategies.

Throughout the visit, AYDN members actively exchanged perspectives on the strengths and limitations of Japan's dietetic system and reflected on its applicability in their own countries. Discussions addressed potential areas for adaptation, anticipated challenges in implementation, and aspects of Japan's system that might benefit from further refinement. Importantly, these exchanges informed the ongoing collaborative manuscript, allowing members to refine their comparative analysis of curriculum structures and educational inputs across AYDN member countries. The opportunity to discuss these themes face-to-face strengthened the conceptual coherence and depth of the research project.

The visit also facilitated meaningful interpersonal and professional connections among members. Shared experiences of observation, dialogue, and cultural immersion fostered trust, mutual understanding, and a sense of collective purpose. Many participants emphasized that meeting in person after extended periods of online communication strengthened their motivation to collaborate and contributed to a deeper appreciation of the diversity and common challenges within the Asian dietetics landscape. The onsite exchange in Aomori not only broadened professional perspectives but also reinforced the core mission of AYDN: to promote collaboration, enhance education and practice, and elevate the status of dietitians across Asia. As AYDN continues to develop, sustained cooperation will remain essential for advancing the profession and improving nutrition across the region. This shared vision is supported by the leadership of Prof. Yamamoto Shigeru, whose guidance continues to inspire young dietitians to pursue excellence and contribute meaningfully to the future of dietetics in Asia.

References:

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