

My experience of disaster assistance in Iwate Prefecture

– My thoughts as part of the mental care support team after the disaster –

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写真 1 (Photo 1). 被災した施設



写真 2 (Photo 2). 昼食を食べた思い出の河原。

Photo 1: A devastated building

Photo 2: The riverside bringing back deep memories, where we had lunch together

Photo 3: The staff members of the second team. The author is on the left hand side.

On 11th March 2011, I fell asleep in my living room after finishing my late-night shift as a nurse. At dinner time on the same day, my eldest son, who is in his second year of junior high school, had said, “I heard that the earthquake that occurred today in the Tohoku area was larger than the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the number of dead or missing people cannot be figured out”. I hurriedly turned on a TV as soon as I heard about it. On TV news, the scene of the tsunami was broadcasted repeatedly and I finally understood that a large area of Tohoku had suffered severe damage from the earthquakes and tsunami.

A few days later, it was announced that our

hospital would also send support staff for mental care to the devastated areas. Suddenly I felt closer to the video pictures of the tsunami on TV news that I had just watched as somebody else’s problem. The moment the chief nurse in our ward said to me, “Could you stay away from home if you are sent as one of the members of the mental care support team to the disaster area in Tohoku?”, TV images of the devastated areas, where everything had been washed away by the tsunami to be reduced to heaps of rubble, came into my mind. It was decided that our hospital would send four staff members, including me, as the second team, to Iwate Prefecture, and we received an explanation of our