

Professionalism and Human Resource Management of Donor Coordinators: Results of an International Comparison

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ABSTRACT

Through our earlier international survey on professionalism with donor coordinators in 38 countries, we identified 5 factors that comprise professionalism and demonstrated that, of these 5 factors, “pursuit of excellence” significantly affects job performance and sense of fulfillment among donor coordinators. In the present study we conducted an international comparison concerning professionalism and organizational actions to foster coordinators’ professionalism and identify implications for Japan. Japan scored significantly lower than other countries in the “pursuit of excellence” factor of professionalism, feedback on the outcome of organ transplantation, peer recognition, and opportunities to educate other staff, which correspond with intrinsic motivation of organizational actions. These results suggested that each hospital must take steps to enhance intrinsic motivation, thereby increasing professionalism that will lead to successful outcomes in the years ahead.

DECEASED organ donation is a much less prominent issue in Japan than it is in Western countries. Since a shortage of organs is a serious social problem in Japan, various solutions to the problem have been considered. The most critical factor in the organ shortage is believed to be the absence of a well-established in-hospital system to convert potential donors into actual donors. In-hospital coordinators are effective in overcoming the organ shortage problem [1–7].

Through a previous survey conducted in 17 European countries [8], we found that the number of organ donations increased when in-hospital coordinators accomplished their tasks with a high degree of professionalism. Therefore, we conducted a questionnaire survey with 6482 in-hospital coordinators in 93 countries to clarify what professionalism means, which factor of professionalism leads to a high rate of organ donation, and what organizational actions positively influence the factor of professionalism. We identified 5 factors comprising professionalism (pursuit of excellence, self-regulation, devotion to the job, job accountability, and social responsibility) and demonstrated that of these 5 factors, “pursuit of excellence” significantly affects donor coordinators’ job performance and sense of fulfillment. We also found that organizations should promote intrinsic motivation, through measures such as peer recognition, feedback on the outcome of organ transplantation, recognition by the government, and opportunities to educate

other staff to foster their “pursuit of excellence” as indicated in Fig 1 [9].

Thus, in the present study we conducted an international comparison concerning professionalism and actions taken by organizations, and identified the implications for Japan.

METHODS

We used existing data that were obtained from 303 respondents in 38 countries. Of the respondents, 51.5% were medical doctors, 41.6% were nurses, and 6.9% were other professionals. Full-time in-hospital coordinators accounted for 36% of the respondents, whereas 64% had a part-time commitment. We divided the subjects into 5 groups: Japan ($n = 37$), Italy ($n = 103$), France ($n = 57$), Spain ($n = 18$), and Other ($n = 88$). The mean points of sense of fulfillment (outcome variable), factors of professionalism, and organizational actions were calculated as follows: 7 points for “strongly agree,” 6 points for “agree,” 5 points for “somewhat agree,” 4 points for “neither agree nor disagree,” 3 points for “somewhat disagree,” 2 points for “disagree,” and 1 point for “strongly disagree.” We conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) concerning outcome variables, factors of professionalism, and actions taken by organizations, using SPSS (PASW Statistics Version 18). Tukey HSD test was used for post-hoc multiple comparisons. The significance threshold was .05.

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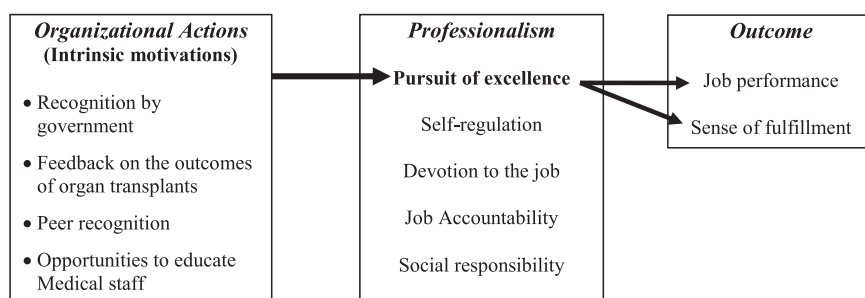


Fig 1. Model of human resource management of in-hospital coordinators through fostering their professionalism.

RESULTS

Mean scores and ANOVA results are shown in Table 1. Regarding outcome variables, job performance and sense of fulfillment were significantly lower in Japan than other countries. Regarding professionalism, Japan scored significantly lower than other countries in “pursuit of excellence,” which leads to job performance and sense of fulfillment. However, for “social responsibility,” Japan did not significantly differ from the other countries. Regarding “actions taken by organizations,” Japan scored significantly lower than other countries in recognition by government, environment to work independently, feedback on the outcomes of organ transplants, peer recognition, and opportunities to educate other staff (intrinsic motivations). Meanwhile, Japan had no significant level of continuing education and higher levels of participation in academic conferences (extrinsic motivations) than other countries.

DISCUSSION

In Japan, the shortage of organs for donation is attributed to various factors, including cultural and institutional aspects. Our study focused on the human resource management of coordinators in donor hospitals because the root of the problems related to organ donation has been traced to hospitals. Legal reforms and increased awareness among the enlightened public alone will not persuade a greater number of potential organ donors to come forth unless the medical setting in which organ donation takes place is improved. In terms of the professionalism of in-hospital coordinators, who play a crucial role in the practice of organ donation, our previous analysis suggested that the organ donation shortage in Japan is attributable to poorly motivated in-hospital coordinators and the lack of engagement in their work [9].

In this study, the “social responsibility” factor of professionalism did not significantly differ between Japan and

Table 1. Results of International Comparison of Human Resource Management of In-Hospital Coordinators

	Mean (SD)				
	Japan (n = 37)	Italy (n = 103)	France (n = 57)	Spain (n = 18)	Other (n = 88)
Job performance					
Donation rate (%)	17.0 (32.9)	42.4 (30.6) [‡]	34.1 (22.5)	54.0 (35.4) [‡]	51.5 (30.4) [‡]
Consent rate by donor family (%)	17.3 (33.2)	57.7 (28.7) [‡]	53.4 (22.0) [‡]	80.6 (21.4) [‡]	61.2 (28.1) [‡]
Sense of fulfillment					
Job satisfaction	3.4 (1.8)	5.5 (1.1) [‡]	5.8 (1.1) [‡]	5.8 (1.0) [‡]	6.2 (0.9) [‡]
Work pride	4.3 (1.5)	6.1 (0.9) [‡]	6.3 (0.8) [‡]	6.3 (0.8) [‡]	6.5 (0.1) [‡]
Professionalism					
Pursuit of excellence	4.4 (1.1)	5.9 (0.5) [‡]	6.1 (0.4) [‡]	6.0 (0.6) [‡]	6.2 (0.4) [‡]
Self-regulation	3.8 (1.6)	4.0 (1.3)	4.5 (3.8)	4.7 (1.1)	4.9 (1.2) [‡]
Devotion to the job	5.2 (1.0)	5.9 (0.7) [‡]	5.7 (0.7) [‡]	5.8 (1.0) [*]	6.3 (0.6) [‡]
Job accountability	5.4 (1.5)	6.0 (0.9) [*]	6.7 (0.5) [‡]	5.8 (1.3)	6.1 (0.9) [‡]
Social responsibility	6.0 (0.7)	6.1 (0.8)	6.1 (0.8)	6.1 (0.8)	6.3 (0.7)
Organizational actions (intrinsic motivations)					
Recognition by government	4.2 (1.4)	5.9 (1.3) [‡]	6.6 (0.8) [‡]	6.0 (1.4) [‡]	5.6 (1.8) [‡]
Environment to work independently	4.0 (1.9)	4.9 (1.6) [*]	5.7 (1.1) [‡]	5.5 (1.4) [‡]	5.6 (1.3) [‡]
Feedback on the outcomes of organ transplants	4.7 (1.7)	5.8 (1.1) [‡]	6.5 (0.9) [‡]	6.2 (1.2) [‡]	6.2 (1.0) [‡]
Peer recognition	3.5 (1.7)	4.5 (1.4) [‡]	4.3 (1.5) [*]	4.9 (1.4) [‡]	5.3 (1.4) [‡]
Opportunity to educate medical staff	4.0 (1.9)	5.4 (1.6) [‡]	6.0 (1.2) [‡]	5.1 (1.9) [‡]	5.6 (1.3) [‡]
Organizational actions (extrinsic motivations)					
Continuing education	5.7 (1.7)	5.2 (1.5)	5.9 (1.1)	6.1 (0.8)	5.4 (1.5)
Participation in professional association	4.7 (1.6)	4.1 (1.6)	3.4 (1.6) [‡]	4.6 (1.1)	5.0 (1.5)

Note: The mean differences between Japan and each country were tested using F tests, and P values of Turkey HSD method are indicated as follows.

^{*}P < .05.

[†]P < .01.

[‡]P < .001.

other countries, indicating that Japanese coordinators are no less willing to contribute to society than those from other countries. However, Japan scored significantly lower than other countries in “pursuit of excellence,” which leads to job performance and sense of fulfillment. Because this factor is nurtured by organizations [9], attention should be paid to human resource management of coordinators.

Our results showed that Japanese hospitals provided sufficient external motivation (continuing education and participation in academic conferences) for coordinators. The results also indicated that desires to gain peer recognition and respect emerged as intrinsic motivators in Japanese coordinators. Likewise, the opportunity to educate other medical staff on the organ donation process and having the skills to communicate with grieving families were found to be intrinsic factors, helping coordinators realize the scope of and gain appreciation for their work.

In conclusion, our results suggested that each hospital in Japan must take steps to enhance intrinsic motivation, thereby increasing professionalism of in-hospital coordinators, which will lead to successful outcomes in the years ahead.

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