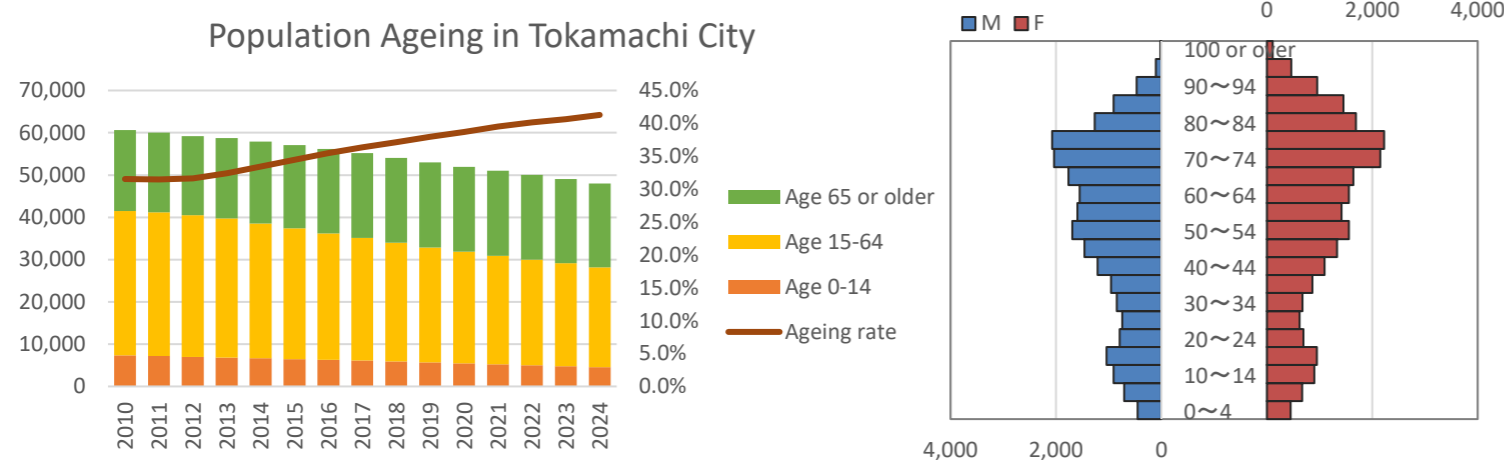
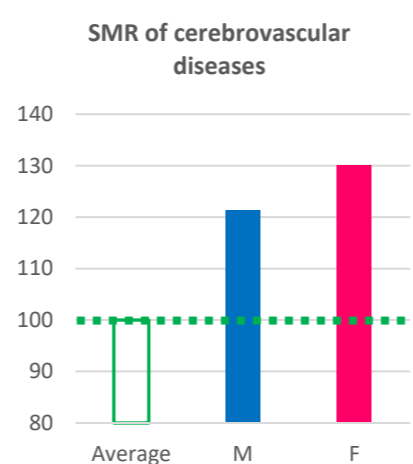


# Community-Based Social Prescribing for Diabetes in a Super-Aged Snowbound Japanese City: Pilot Evaluation

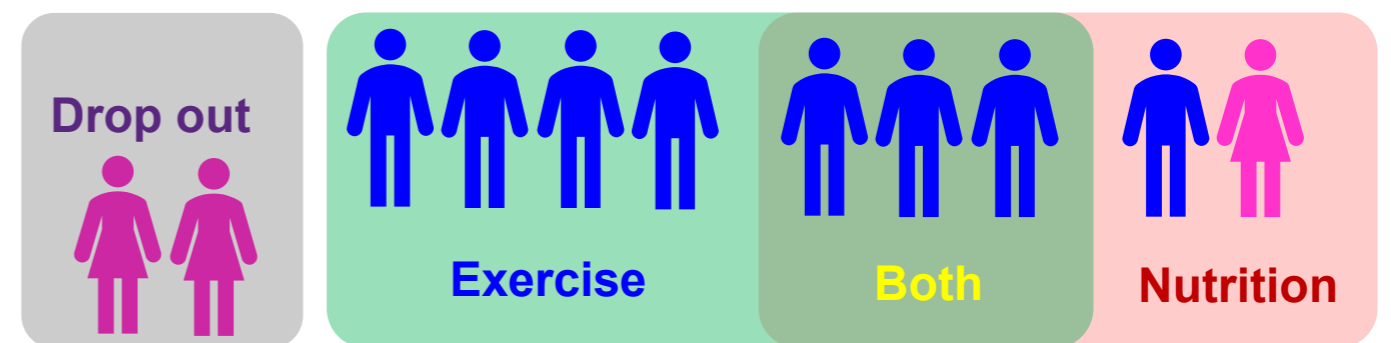
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**Background** Japan is facing a rapidly aging population and a decline in rural populations. As a result, advanced medical care has become concentrated in cities, making it harder for people in rural areas to access care for chronic diseases. Tokamachi City – a snowy mountain area where 42% of residents are over 65 – has an unusually high stroke mortality rate (SMR[standardized mortality ratio] 120–130, meaning about 20–30% higher than the national average). One reason for this high stroke risk is inadequate diabetes management among residents.

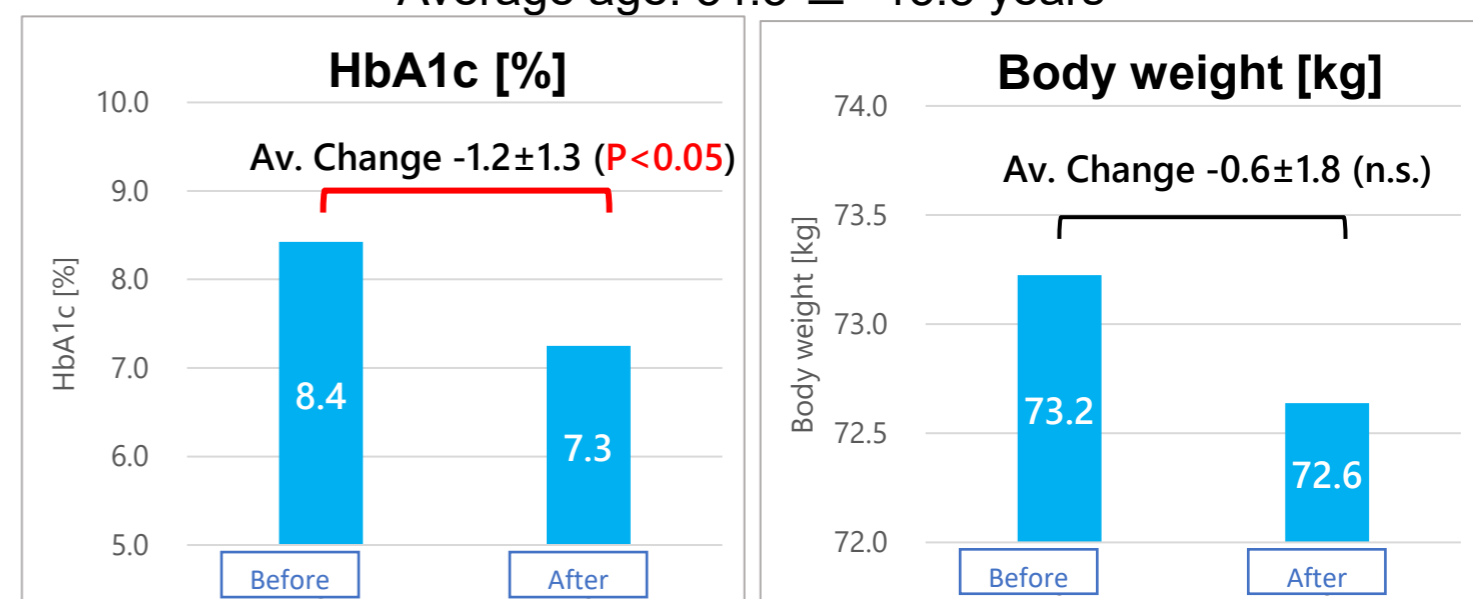


## Results

**10** individuals enrolled in the program, and **8** completed the 3-month intervention.



Participants: 7 men and 1 woman  
Average age: 54.5 ± 15.8 years

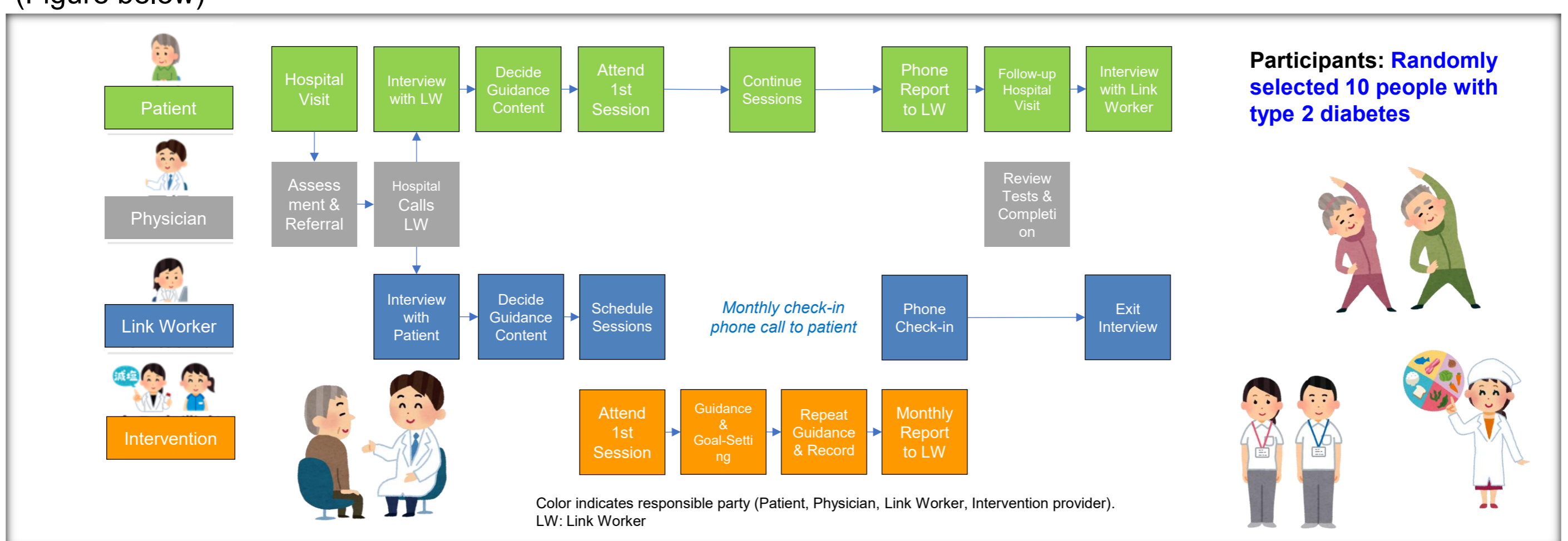


## Voices from Participants

*"I was encouraged by my doctor's suggestion and felt welcomed at the exercise class, which helped me keep going."*  
*"Seeing the result (losing weight) made the benefits real to me and motivated me to continue."*  
*"The exercise and nutrition guidance were adjusted to suit my own pace, which made it just right for me."*  
*"Attending the classes gave me something to look forward to and gave more purpose to my daily life."*

**Objective** To see if a social prescribing program led by link workers can improve diabetes outcomes (better blood sugar control) and serve as a sustainable, community-driven health promotion approach.

**Method** The flow chart below illustrates the social prescribing model implemented in Tokamachi City. (Figure below)



## Lessons Learned

- ✓ Social prescribing for diabetes patients may help them adopt healthier behaviors, proving to be useful in clinical practice.
- ✓ We observed measurable improvements in diabetes outcomes when link workers quickly connected participants with the services they needed.
- ✓ Link worker support may have given participants a greater sense of purpose – their *ikigai*.

## Ethical Considerations & Funding

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## Policy Recommendations

- ✓ Social prescribing should be considered a strategy to encourage healthy behavior change in patients with diabetes.
- ✓ This program is already being put into practice. In 2025; it was integrated into the follow-up health guidance for people who had abnormal results in their Specific Health Checkups (*tokutei kenshin*: annual national health screening program in Japan).