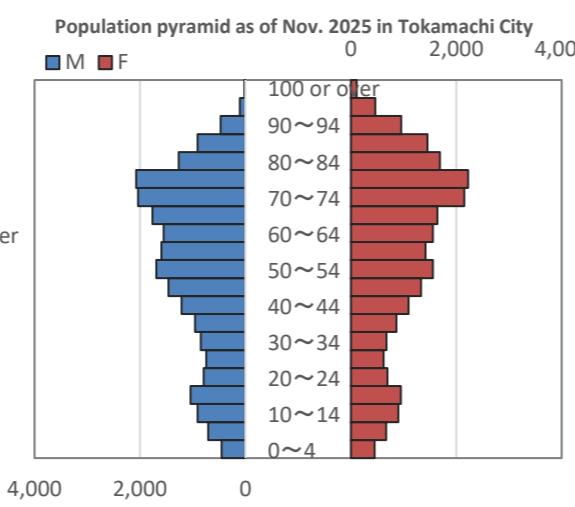
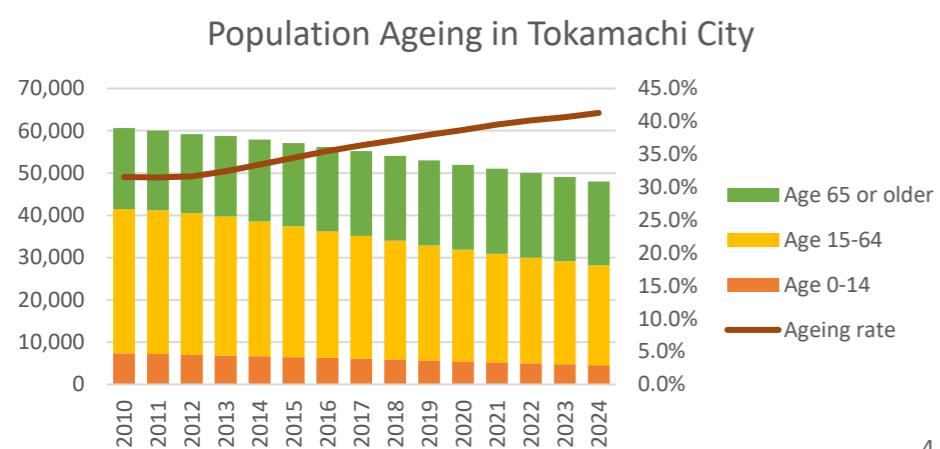
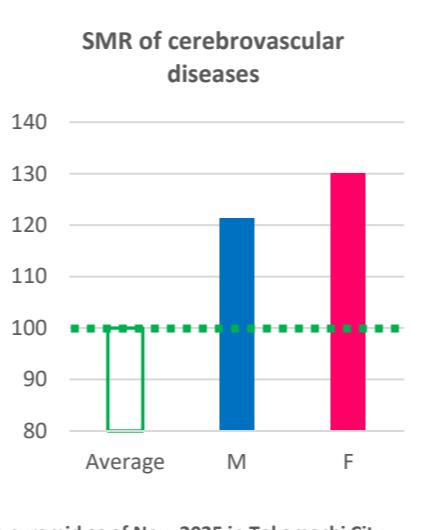


Community-Based Social Prescribing for Diabetes in a Super-Aged Snowbound Japanese City: Pilot Evaluation

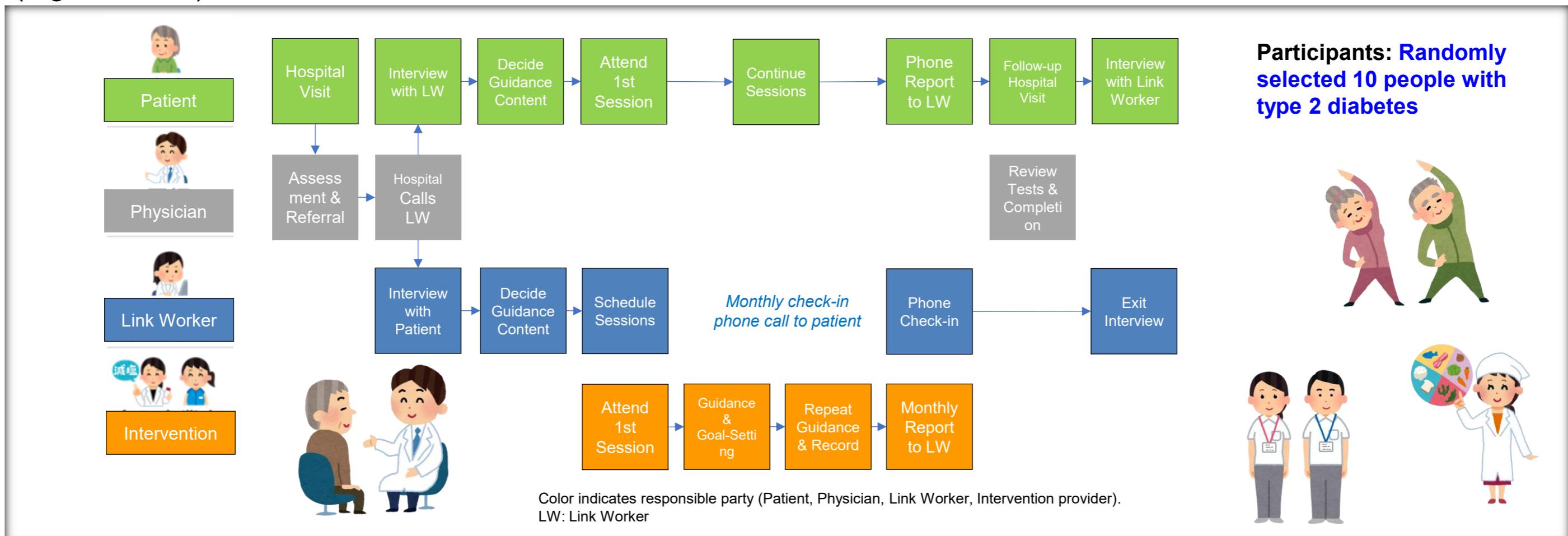
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Background Japan is facing a rapidly aging population and a decline in rural populations. As a result, advanced medical care has become concentrated in cities, making it harder for people in rural areas to access care for chronic diseases. Tokamachi 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.



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

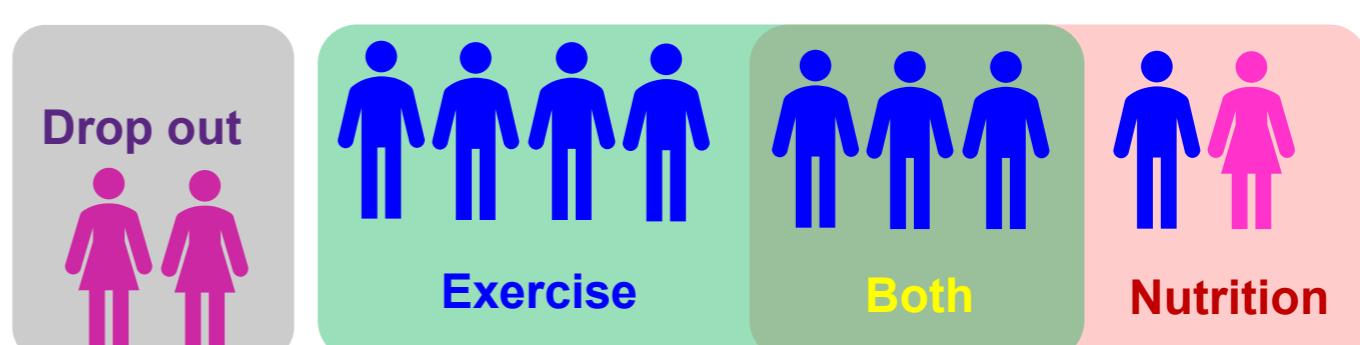
- ✓ Social prescribing for diabetes patients may help them adopt healthier behaviors, proving to be useful in clinical practice.
- ✓ We observed measurable improvements in diabetes outcomes when link workers quickly connected participants with the services they needed.
- ✓ Link worker support may have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

Ethical Considerations & Funding

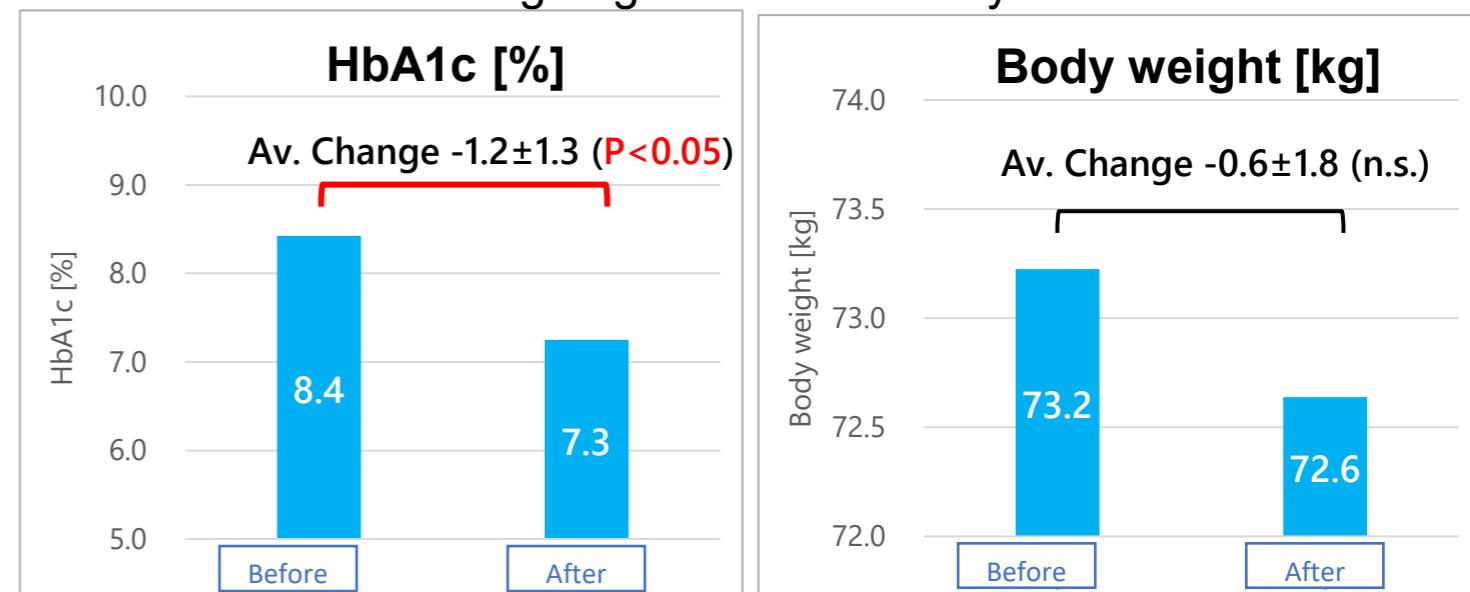
This study was approved by the Niigata University Ethics Review Committee (Approval No. 2023-0297). It was supported by the RISTEX (Research Institute of Science and Technology for Society) program (Grant No. JPMJRS2415). The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose for this presentation.

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."

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).