



Protect the Lives of Our Patients!

United in Hope in the Cold and Darkness : Shizugawa Hospital



▲ Patients were carried to the conference room on the fifth floor of the hospital, where the staff continued to look after them, working frantically through the night.

The region's core hospital, Shizugawa Hospital, had nine departments and 126 beds. It consisted of an old four-story building and a new five-story building, with hospital beds on the third and fourth floors. Many of the hospitalized patients were elderly people who had difficulty walking.

Initially, the tsunami was predicted to be 6 meters high, so the hospital staff thought everyone would be safe even if the water level rose, as long as they were on the third floor or above. This was because the predicted height of the wave was similar to that of the tsunami that hit Minamisanriku as a result of the 1960 Chile earthquake. However, the tsunami warning was raised to 10 meters, and very soon after, the area was flooded with a wave 16 meters in height. Some patients were swept away with their beds. Of the 109 hospitalized patients, 63 lost their lives in the tsunami, together with four members of the staff. Seven patients died of hypothermia or hypoxia.

Earthquake aftershocks and tsunami waves continued to strike. In the darkness and severe cold, staff worked desperately to protect the lives of their patients. They tried to warm the drenched survivors and called out to their patients all through the night: "Hold hands!" "Stand up!"