

Chapter 5

Expansion of Comprehensive Minamata Disease Research

Establishment of the National Institute for Minamata Disease

The National Institute for Minamata Disease was established in Minamata City, Kumamoto Prefecture in October 1978 in consideration of the serious historical and social significance of Minamata disease and as the geographical origin of pollution in Japan, in order to assist in the development of measures against Minamata disease and improve methods of treatment for Minamata disease sufferers through comprehensive medical research.

In September 1986, the center was designated as a World Health Organization (WHO) cooperative research institution into the health effects of organic mercury.

Following moves toward a resolution in 1995, the national government, in an effort to finally resolve the Minamata disease issue completely, revised the organization of the center with an aim to "use its unique characteristic as the origin of Minamata disease to provide enriched research facilities into the disease", and in doing so, communicate the lessons of the Minamata experience to the world and contribute internationally in the fields of environmental and human health. In addition to its original use as a medical research center into Minamata disease, the center is today used for research into the social and natural sciences, international research and as a resource center for the collection, organization and supply of information on Minamata disease.



National Institute for Minamata Disease



Study on epidemiological experiment

Establishment of the Minamata Disease Archives

In June 2001 the Minamata Disease Archives opened adjacent to the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum and the Kumamoto Prefectural Environment Center, as part of the National Institute for Minamata Disease. The aim of the center is to increase awareness of Minamata disease through its own research findings and the collection, storage and analysis of information concerning organic mercury from other sources in Japan and abroad. Thanks to these three facilities, the national, prefectural and municipal governments are working together to gather and disseminate information concerning Minamata disease and the environment.



Minamata disease information center