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Sunday, March 13, 2011

## Hospitals stretched to the breaking point

Kyodo News

Tohoku region hospitals Saturday weren't just helping patients but also people who lost their homes and needed a safe place to stay amid the quake and tsunami disaster.

But due to power outages, hospitals said they had limited electricity to maintain vital functions and feared other supplies would run out quickly.

Tohoku Kosei Nenkin Hospital in Miyagino Ward, Sendai, was treating 400 patients while meanwhile looking after dozens of locals seeking shelter. The meeting space they opened for the evacuees was filled immediately after the quake, and some people spent the night in hallways.

The hospital's in-house generators were capable of maintaining two days of power, and officials worried they might not be able to use artificial respirators.

"The situation concerns the lives of our patients. We really need more power and other supplies," hospital official Yutaka Hoshi said.

At Tohoku University Hospital in Aoba Ward, Sendai, which had some 1,000 patients, power was back Saturday morning.

"We are trying to maintain use of our operating room, but because the water supply has stopped, there are limited types of surgery we can perform," an official there said.

Fukushima Red Cross Hospital in Fukushima Prefecture said it was relying on its in-house power generator and water supply, but overall conditions were still dire.

The health ministry said in the morning that 22 hospitals in 11 prefectures designated by the government to treat patients from disasters were full.

But because there are hospitals that have lost communications, the ministry said there could be more facing over-capacity.

Meanwhile, the ministry said it dispatched a special team of doctors who specialize in treating radiation patients to Fukushima Prefecture, where nuclear power plants are in trouble. Fukushima Prefectural Medical University Hospital was preparing to host the medical team.

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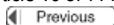
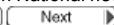
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A piece of your mind

### Up in smoke

A 17-year old Japanese student was [sentenced to 12 years in jail in Bali when police found he was carrying marijuana](#). What's your take?

- The teen should have stayed away from drugs. Period.**
- They should focus on locking up the dealers, not the buyers.**
- Indonesia is known for strict drug laws. He's lucky the punishment isn't more severe.**
- The penalty is too harsh for someone so young.**
- This seems excessive for pot possession.**

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