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Reproductive health should be focus of Fukushima nuclear disaster

By Keiji Hirano

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Based on her experiences of supporting victims of the Chernobyl disaster, a senior member of a nonprofit organization said it is necessary to pay much more attention to the reproductive health of those exposed to low levels of radiation in the Fukushima nuclear accident.

While there has been much attention focused on the risk of thyroid cancer, based on research that showed the number of childhood thyroid cancer cases started increasing four or five years after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, Yuko Yoshida pointed to a another area that must not be overlooked, telling a recent symposium held by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations in Tokyo that "women exposed to low levels of radiation in adolescence face a high risk to their reproduction health."

"These women are more likely to go through problematic pregnancies, such as premature birth and the accumulation of an excessive amount of amniotic fluid," said Yoshida, who is secretary general for Chernobyl Health Survey and Health Care Support for the Victims -- Japan Women's Network. She also stressed the need to focus not only on serious diseases such as cancer but also on various other health impacts in areas contaminated by radioactivity in Fukushima, northeastern Japan.

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