(Tokyo, 16 February 2017) Five students from Juntendo University Faculty of Medicine and one from the Faculty of International Liberal Arts studying to be a medical translator participated in a community health promotion program for families living in Japan with members whose first language is not Japanese.

The aim of this program was to give medical doctors and medical translators of the future first hand experience of the challenges faced in health care by people living in Japan whose first language is not Japanese.

“This form of international outreach based on medical care is a rare and unusual case to support both parents and their young children,” said Midori Nii of NPO CINGA, who coordinated the event.

Furthermore, Naoko Ono, lecturer in intercultural communication in medical communication at the Faculty of International Liberal Arts, Juntendo University, also participated in the event and joined the students to interview families who had applied for health consultation as well as attending the health consultation sessions by Professor Yuko Takeda.

Japanese was not the mother tongue of the majority of members of the participating families, they requested health consultations using ‘easy to understand Japanese’. Through the interviews, the students realized that level of understanding and response of the participants depends on the manner of questioning.

Professor Takeda observed that: "The language barrier prevents people from accessing appropriate health care, and could easily affect their health status.” She added that, “this outreach program is very effective in providing students with the opportunity to become aware of how important it is to recognize the wide range of psychosocial backgrounds of people who might be their patients one day. The role of doctors is not only diagnosing medical conditions

for proper treatment but also becoming an advocate for their patients and the communities they serve."

Hinano Tsuboya, participant and a second year medical student at Juntendo University, said, "I saw people who had health and medical problems as well as lifestyle related issues, due to differences in culture and language barriers; I realized that training to become a doctor is not limited to medical knowledge and technology. When I become a doctor in the future, I would like to be able to conduct medical care based on this experience."

The families also participated in games designed to teach the importance of good nutrition for a healthy life. The children particularly enjoyed collecting seals during the "stamp rally".

Reika Masuda, a second year student who was involved in planning the nutrition classes and who is studying to be a medical interpretation at the Faculty of International Liberal Studies said, "It was great to see active participation of the highly motivated children as well; it was worth all the preparation. As I was unable to answer some of the questions for a mother, and as someone studying to be an interpreter I realized that it is important to investigate and acquire sufficient knowledge beforehand in my field of study, and I think that it is important to directly connect to the other people's world for a deeper understanding about their lives."

This was the first such event even for 'NPO Machinohiroba' with the support of a social worker. Kazuko Kaji of NPO Machinohiroba said, "Although we have already conducted interviews with family members in our daily activities, on this occasion we were able to identify children's psychological challenges and health issues because we worked together with experts in medical and social care. In the future, we would like to continue carrying out our activities in collaboration with these specialists."

About Juntendo University

Mission Statement

The mission of Juntendo University is to strive for advances in society through education,

research, and healthcare, guided by the motto “Jin – I exist as you exist” and the principle of “Fudan Zenshin - Continuously Moving Forward”. The spirit of “Jin”, which is the ideal of all those who gather at Juntendo University, entails being kind and considerate of others. The principle of “Fudan Zenshin” conveys the belief of the founders that education and research activities will only flourish in an environment of free competition. Our academic environment enables us to educate outstanding students to become healthcare professionals patients can believe in, scientists capable of innovative discoveries and inventions, and global citizens ready to serve society.

About Juntendo

Juntendo was originally founded in 1838 as a Dutch School of Medicine at a time when Western medical education was not yet embedded as a normal part of Japanese society. With the creation of Juntendo, the founders hoped to create a place where people could come together with the shared goal of helping society through the powers of medical education and practices. Their aspirations led to the establishment of Juntendo Hospital, the first private hospital in Japan. Through the years the institution’s experience and perspective as an institution of higher education and a place of clinical practice has enabled Juntendo University to play an integral role in the shaping of Japanese medical education and practices. Along the way the focus of the institution has also expanded, now consisting of four undergraduate programs and three graduate programs, the university specializes in the fields of health and sports science and nursing health care and sciences, as well as medicine. Today, Juntendo University continues to pursue innovative approaches to international level education and research with the goal of applying the results to society.