

10 September 2021

News

RERF holds first meeting of Stakeholder Committee on Genome Sequencing Analysis for A-bomb Survivors' Children

In April of this year, the Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF) newly established the Stakeholder Committee on Genome Sequencing Analysis for A-bomb Survivor's Children. In forming the committee, RERF aims to create the opportunity to listen to the opinions of external committee members toward formulating policy for genome sequencing analysis of A-bomb survivor parents and their children. The committee consists of 14 members from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, including academicians, legal experts, A-bomb survivors, and second-generation A-bomb survivors. The first meeting of the stakeholder committee was held on two days, August 21 and 25th, 2021.

At this first meeting, RERF explained several topics including the purpose of the committee, an outline of the Stakeholder Committee on Usage of RERF's Stored Biosamples (active during 2018–2020), and the past and future of the research on children of A-bomb survivors. Committee members responded by raising issues related to the handling of personal information and the management of personal genomic data. At the same time, while some expressed their expectation that the research would answer the long-standing question of whether there were genetic effects from the atomic bombings, others indicated their concern about societal impacts such as the potential for anxiety among survivors and their children as well as reappearance of discrimination against such individuals.

At the close of the meeting, RERF Chairman Ohtsura Niwa gave concluding remarks. "I fully understand that, regardless of scientific outcome, children and grandchildren of A-bomb survivors would worry their ill health is due to the A-bombings of previous generations. All RERF can do is to produce accurate research results through consistent and repeated efforts based on formal procedures. We have set up this committee as part of that process. The frank opinions of all the committee members are essential for conducting this research."

Plans call for the committee to meet four or five times going forward, and at the end, the committee will make recommendations to RERF regarding the research. After the meeting, RERF held a press conference in which 11 media outlets from Hiroshima and eight from Nagasaki participated.