

My name is Midori Kawashima. I have been a nurse for 74 years and have always focused on clinical nursing practice. I am still been involved in nursing education and research. While communicating with nurses I keep on talking and writing about my experiences.

In May, when Japan was hit by the third wave of COVID-19, the number of severely ill people nationwide reached a record high, and hospitals in the Kansai region reported a life-threatening triage crisis. A nurse at a university hospital in Tokyo cried out to me: "I can't take it anymore. Please help me!"

She is a mid-career nurse, a woman who loves her job, works with pride, and had been working in a COVID-19 ward since early last year. She said, "I've been working hard until today, but the staff is exhausted with the increasing number of severely ill patients. Some of them are depressed or choosing to quit, and the manpower shortage is at its peak. I love nursing and I've been doing it for a long time, but I can't do it anymore."

This was the same time that the media reported the news that the Organizing Committee of the Olympics was requesting the Japan Nurses Association to dispatch 500 nurses.

The work environment and conditions for nurses has always been difficult, but it became harder and harder with the spread of COVID-19. For example, nurses in the ICU are soaked in their own sweat under their PPE, and cannot even break to drink water or use the toilet. Even after the doctors leave for the green zone, they have to stay in the red zone for at least four hours, sometimes seven to eight hours, providing life-saving treatment and patient care, and sometimes doing other work beyond their normal duties.

Even in the wards other than the ICU, nurses have made an effort to fulfill their duties faithfully. They are not allowed to go home for fear of infecting their families, and when they do come home, they cannot even hold their young children. Some nurses work late and sleep in the hospital's nap room or in a hotel at their own expense.

The seriousness of the situation in the medical field can be imagined from the social networking site that reported the tragic suicide of a nurse in a COVID-19 ward. I don't speak in detail, but most of the more than 800 comments on the post were words of shock and mourning for the death, and anger at the inept government for pushing the situation to this point. 5,233 shares indicate the strength of people's interest in the harsh reality of the medical field.

We nurses strongly protest the forced Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics and sincerely hope that the events will be cancelled, not only to prevent similar incidents from happening again, but also to protect the lives of all potential recipients of medical care.