

Recommendations on Strategic Investments in Policies for Brain Health to Revitalize Japan: Hopes for the New Administration

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Purpose of these policy recommendations

On October 20, 2025, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Japan Innovation Party (JIP) concluded a Coalition Agreement that formed the framework for a new administration in Japan. The agreement states that “Japan faces domestic and international circumstances of unprecedented difficulty” and declares that the intent of the coalition is to “overcome national crises and revitalize Japan.” (Please note that portions of the Coalition Agreement quoted in English in these recommendations are tentative translations provided by HGPI.)

While placing our expectations on this new government framework, the Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI) Dementia Project has decided to compile these recommendations from the perspective of people living with dementia for the new administration. Under our stated mission of “Achieving citizen-centered health policy,” HGPI aims to present policy options to society that are generated through multi-stakeholder discussions that involve patients, other people with lived experience of health concerns, and citizens. Based on the knowledge the Dementia Project has gathered by hosting various discussions and authoring policy recommendations, we offer these recommendations in hopes of setting an ideal and appropriate direction for future dementia policy.

Recommendation 1: Provide and develop strategic investments in R&D that is co-created with people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them for “effective public-private investment grounded on responsible and proactive financing” in the field of dementia

One item the Coalition Agreement calls for is “effective public-private investments based on responsible and proactive financing.” Progress in dementia policy is an important area that directly embodies this vision. For many years, HGPI has advocated the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in dementia research that encompass data, funding, and human resources. Dementia is an area where R&D and the practical implementation of measures are needed in various areas in addition to medicine. These include health, welfare, long-term care, and social participation, and this is a policy issue in which the impact of public-private investments is most promising.

Priority Item 4 of the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Policies on Dementia approved by Cabinet Decision in December 2024 states that R&D should reflect the opinions of people living with dementia and their families, and others close to them. Around the world, it is becoming the standard for research to be co-created with people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them and conducted in a manner in which these parties and researchers have an equal share in leadership roles. In addition to PPPs, basing research on the needs, perspectives, and lived experiences of people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them will be an essential step for generating results that are relevant in the daily lives of people living with dementia, their families, and society as a whole. Structuring R&D in this way will also facilitate the effective use of limited resources while maximizing research results.

HGPI emphasizes the importance of co-creating flexible forms of research involvement that are well-suited to Japan's culture and real-world circumstances, in which people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them are equal partners with researchers, and in which these parties build relationships founded on trust and deepen mutual understanding. The strategic allocation of resources for R&D co-created with people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them is precisely what will be the key to producing innovations that can compete on the international level and achieve the “effective investments” described by the new administration.

Recommendation 2: Establish strategic investments in frameworks that balance sustainability and quality improvements for services to build the inclusive society envisioned in the Basic Act on Dementia

The Basic Act on Dementia enacted in 2023 aims to make society an inclusive place that upholds the dignity of people living with dementia and that enables them to live with hope. Building a system that continues to “provide sustainable healthcare and long-term care services even in communities with declining populations” mentioned in the Coalition Agreement is a goal that fully aligns with the philosophy of the Basic Act on Dementia, which is to enable people living with dementia to continue living true to themselves in their communities.

In addition to securing sufficient resources, elevating quality standards will be an essential step in expanding medical, health, long-term care, and welfare services. Such efforts will also require cross-cutting collaboration spanning each of these areas. Achieving the Coalition Agreement's objective of “halting and reversing the growth of health insurance premiums for working-age generations” will require ingenious methods of optimizing the use of limited resources. For example, it may be possible to improve sustainability while elevating quality by making operations more efficient using AI or by introducing digital technology and then shifting the extra time or human resources to providing direct support to people living with dementia or to enhancing the quality of care.

Given the recent increase in the number of households with only older couples or single senior citizens, preventing isolation and promoting social participation have become urgent issues. One principle of the Basic Act on Dementia is to “consider and implement policies together with people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them,” which is consistent with the intent to “reflect the voices of patients” when reforming the Central Social Insurance Medical Council expressed in the Coalition Agreement, and which will also make it possible to design services that are based on the true needs of those most affected.

In the new administration's reforms of social security, one important area in dementia policy will be building a sustainable system while maintaining service quality by identifying which services are truly necessary through the involvement of people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them and by ensuring that limited resources are allocated in the most effective manner possible. Efficiently building this system will also require a review of the administrative framework itself. While the conventional focus of dementia policy has been the administration of long-term care and welfare, this must be reexamined in light of recent progress in science and medical technology. We hope to see dementia administration appropriately redefined so that a high level of knowledge and wisdom can be reflected in policy. This will be an important perspective when searching for where to strike a balance between reducing the burden for working-age generations and achieving dignified living for people living with dementia, their families, and others close to them.

Recommendation 3: Position strategic investment in brain health at the core of Japan's growth strategy to create "a society where people can continue working regardless of their age"

The Coalition Agreement makes clear mention of "creating a society in which people can continue working regardless of their age." Given the labor shortages Japan has faced in recent years, it will be crucial to establish an environment in which more people can maintain good health while remaining in the workforce according to their own intent and capacity. Earning a living is not the only reason people work; there are also aspects to work that are related to self-actualization, fulfillment, and feeling connected to society through social participation. It can also be said that upholding personal dignity and quality of life (QOL) while ensuring individuals have roles and places to belong in their communities even when working becomes difficult due to the progression of dementia or other health-related reasons is a prerequisite condition for creating a truly sustainable society.

To achieve this, it will be necessary to foster a society and culture that focuses on brain health in addition to physical health. The key to doing so is the concept of the "brain economy," in which brain health is viewed as the foundation for sustainable economic growth and progress for human society rather than only as an issue for the health sector. As this concept clearly positions efforts for brain health as an investment in Japan's society in the future rather than merely as a cost on society, it allows us to take a significant step forward and progress from our previous understanding. In addition, investing in the research infrastructure will be crucial for enabling this concept to take root in society in a manner based on scientific evidence. Specific actions for this include establishing indicators for brain health through large, long-term cohort studies that include healthy subjects; conducting research on workplace environments and social participation models that enable people who have developed dementia to remain in the workforce; and developing ongoing educational programs that allow people to learn about dementia and other brain-related diseases early in life. Such efforts can be expected to help foster a society and culture that have a medium- to long-term perspective accurately reflecting real-world workplace circumstances and is based on evidence.

There is also a great amount of inherent value in making society a place where brain health is a topic of everyday concern and people make it a habit to maintain and improve brain health throughout the life course. From the perspective of dementia, building these habits will also create a social foundation that will enable people to appropriately respond to dementia at various stages of progression without excessive worry. For example, for Alzheimer's disease, one of the main causes of dementia, there is a great amount of interest in future discussions on the provision of therapeutic interventions at very early stages, before clinical symptoms are present. This theme aligns with Prime Minister Takaichi's vision to "optimize medical spending and extend healthy life expectancy through assertive preventive medicine," which was mentioned during the campaign for LDP presidency. However, many of the initiatives for this vision will not perform adequately under the conventional system in which people visit healthcare facilities after they notice or someone close to them notices subjective symptoms. It will only be possible for people to grasp their own conditions at early stages and make proactive choices from the various options available to them after the habit of regularly checking one's brain health becomes the standard. This type of proactive decision-making is also aligned with the philosophy of the Basic Act on Dementia.

In a "society where people can continue working regardless of their age" like the one that the new administration hopes to create, investing in brain health will not only help maintain a vigorous workforce but will also help create an inclusive society of optimal living for everyone, including people living with dementia. We look forward to seeing strategic investments made in brain health to achieve economic sustainability and create a society where no one is left behind.

Regarding the independent nature of these recommendations

These recommendations were compiled by HGPI in its capacity as an independent health policy think-tank based on discussions held at our meetings. They do not in any capacity represent the opinions of experts or speakers who are involved in the HGPI Dementia Project, nor of the companies or organizations with which they are affiliated.

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Author: Health and Global Policy Institute Dementia Project

Shunichiro Kurita	(Senior Manager, Health and Global Policy Institute)
Honoka Hiraka	(Senior Associate, Health and Global Policy Institute)
Hikaru Sato	(Associate, Health and Global Policy Institute)
Nana Moriguchi	(Associate, Health and Global Policy Institute)
Favour Omileke	(Program Specialist, Health and Global Policy Institute)

Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI)

Grand Cube 3F, Otemachi Financial City, Global Business Hub Tokyo
 1-9-2, Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004 JAPAN
 TEL: +81-3-4243-7156 FAX: +81-3-4243-7378 E-mail: info@hgpi.org