



CUHK Japan Forum

Department of Japanese Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



Uninformed Consent: Doctors, Lying, and Cancer in Japan

Prof. Aaron HAMES

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11:00 am – 12:00 noon

Room 401, Leung Kau Kui Building, CUHK

In English. No registration required.

All are welcome!

Until the early 2000s, doctors in Japan routinely kept diagnoses of cancer from their patients. The widespread rationale was that the severity of a cancer diagnosis was too traumatic, and patients would simply give up. Over the last two decades, however, legal precedents and practices have changed. Informed consent for cancer diagnoses has become standard in the Japanese medical system. Nevertheless, doctors occasionally withhold information from patients. This talk examines the circumstances and choices that keep patients ignorant of their conditions. Despite legal shifts, I contend, the practice of informed consent in Japan may privilege the views of family. Doctors and family members understand the patient as part of a family rather than an indivisible entity with autonomy.

Aaron Hames is a medical anthropologist and a Research Assistant Professor in the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at the University of Hong Kong. His research examines how the elderly in Japan encounter an ageing society and work through cooperative medical organizations to meet their social and health needs.

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