Relationship between the density of tatami stores and COVID-19 in Japan

Soshi Iwasaki
Yoshiyasu Kigawa
Kazunobu Takahashi
Michiaki Yamakage

Video Byte

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Abstract

With the global health crisis of COVID-19 having widespread effects on economies and communities, understanding environmental factors that affect the transmissibility of SARS-CoV-2 is critical. Following up on a previous study demonstrating that removing shoes indoors may lower the COVID-19 mortality rate, researchers in Japan evaluated the correlation of a unique metric with COVID-19 morbidity and mortality. Tatami is a type of straw mat used for flooring in traditional Japanese-style rooms. Because people customarily remove their shoes before entering tatami rooms researchers used the density of tatami stores in a locale as a proxy for the cultural practice of shoe removal. They found that while COVID-19 morbidity and mortality increased with population density there was a negative correlation between the number of tatami stores per 100,000 people – and therefore the likelihood of shoe removal – and the number of COVID-19 cases . Although increasing the use of tatami may require an impractical amount of time and resources, these results suggest that removing shoes indoors may reduce the spread of COVID-19 acting as an easy implementable action that we can all take to help protect ourselves and our families from infection.