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Significance of The Regular Publication of Statistics on National Health Indicators in Academic Journals and The Prospects of Korea National Antimicrobial Use Analysis System (KONAS)

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"Trends in National Pharmaceutical Expenditure in Korea" is the first report on pharmaceutical expenditure and spending for therapeutic classes in Korea, providing comparative statistics with those in other countries [1]. It is expected to serve as a key reference for establishing policies on the sustainability of national health insurance and pharmaceuticals.

Statistics on national health indicators provide stakeholders with data that can vividly grasp the health situation within the country, and policymakers can set directions of policies on national health based on the data; therefore systematic management of the data is important [2]. Furthermore, to produce reliable statistics on national health indicators, it is imperative to secure representative data sources [2]. Korea already has well-established infrastructure to generate valuable statistics on national health indicators actively. Under the universal coverage system, the National Health Insurance (NHI) of Korea covers 98% of the total population, including low-income families, and the Health Insurance and Review Service (HIRA) systemically manages NHI data, which includes comprehensive information regarding treatments, pharmaceuticals, procedures, diagnoses, etc. [3]. To actualize the potential of NHI data, HIRA established the "HIRA research institute" to conduct research for improving the quality of tasks as well as develop policies surrounding NHI. It also provides wide-ranging de-identified or anonymized data to researchers in academic institutions [3].

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Although the "HIRA research institute" and other research institutions produce well-qualified statistics, they would not serve as "living" data unless they are efficiently delivered to researchers in academic communities and policymakers. Therefore, an important role of academic journals with regard to statistics on national health indicators is to certify the quality of the data and disseminate them to suitable audience and readers [4]. Furthermore, to easily identify changes in statistics and the evolution of surveillance systems over time, it would be desirable to publish statistics on specific health indicators in the form of regular reports in collaboration with academic journals. Similar to the series "Cancer Statistics in Korea," the annual report published in Cancer Research and Treatment [5], Infection and Chemotherapy will make an effort to report national health indicators for infectious diseases and antibiotics for advancing public health in Korea.

In this respect, the "Report on Antibiotic Prescription in Korean Hospitals," which the Korea National Antimicrobial Use Analysis System (KONAS) plans to publish regularly in Infection and Chemotherapy, is expected to serve as a meaningful project. KONAS is a benchmarking system for antimicrobial use in hospitals that was developed by the Korean Society of Infectious Diseases in collaboration with the Korean Society for Antimicrobial Therapy and HIRA in 2021; the first national report is scheduled to be released in 2023 [6]. Since the most important cause of the emergence of antibiotic resistance is "overuse or misuse of antibiotics," many developed countries such as Australia, Canada, and the UK have already issued national reports on antibiotic use, and established the direction of the antibiotic stewardship policy through it [7]. We hope that the regular report on antibiotic prescription to be issued by KONAS will significantly advance national policy and academic achievement in antibiotic stewardship in Korea.

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Conflict of Interest
JYC is editorial board of Infect Chemother; however, he did not involve in the peer reviewer selection, evaluation, and decision process of this article. Otherwise, no potential conflicts of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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