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Translator bridges doctor-patient gap

Good Sam responds to international business trends

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DAYTON — When Japanese businessman Yuzo Ishikawa had a heart attack last September, he was rushed to the emergency room of Good Samaritan Hospital and Health Center, Dayton.

Fortunately, Ishikawa knew some English. Earlier this summer, his wife, Takako, who speaks minimal English, underwent emergency surgery to remove an ovary.

On both occasions, the couple relied on the services of hospital interpreter Tomiko Cross, a Japanese American who has worked at Good Samaritan for 20 years.

"I stayed with her all day because she wanted someone there who spoke Japanese," said Cross, who also works as a microfilm technician for the hospital. The Huber Heights woman came to the United States from Tokyo in 1969.



Tomiko Cross of Good Samaritan Hospital answers healthcare questions for Yuzo Ishikawa and his wife, Takako, at Healthpark, the Good Samaritan Hospital and Health Center satellite facility in Tipp City. (CT photo by Lenore Christopher)

continual need for Cross's services, said John Marzano, the hospital's public affairs director.

In February 1990, Good

hospital and the Healthpark and is on call for emergencies through a mobile phone. Many Japanese company executives call her directly.

arriving Japanese faced and discussed the problem with Good Samaritan President K. Douglas Deck just over two years ago.

"For most Japanese, their first concern is health care," she said.

Currently, Cross works with about 14 Japanese companies and 50 additional families, Marzano said. At Ishikawa's company alone, she has helped 10 people, including three women who requested her presence during their babies' deliveries.

Cross is the sole interpreter in the program, but occasionally seeks assistance from a Japanese nurse on the hospital staff.

Marzano did not rule out hiring more interpreters if the program continues to grow.

"The Japanese like to build long-term relationships," he said. "The more she can do, the better the relations the patients will have with the hospital."

Cross said she visits Japanese companies where the hospital conducts cholesterol and respiratory screenings and translates at orientations introducing Japanese company executives to basic U.S. health