

My Heart Fell in Kyorin

by Dr Khairul Idzam Bin Muslim

Mastering regional anaesthesia in Japan was something that I had only dreamt of doing for quite a long time. Originally I figured it was far too expensive and difficult to be able to travel abroad and do such things so I put it off my list. However, after my application was accepted by Professor Dr Tomoko Yorozu of Kyorin University Hospital, I immediately grabbed this opportunity with the intention of gaining more new knowledge and experiences in the field of regional anaesthesia. This is where my trip to Japan begins.

As part of my subspecialty requirement, it needed me to do an attachment abroad, I was required to study in Tokyo from July 2018 until April 2019. For nine months, my personal journey in The Land of the Rising Sun has taken me out of my linguistic and cultural comfort zones, as well as empowered me to expand my exposure, not only in regional anaesthesia skills but also to Japanese working culture and medical system as a whole.



Even though learning abroad can seem out of reach, giving yourself a chance to experience new culture allows you to understand yourself from an outside perspective, as well as harnessing the ability to develop unforgettable friendships, and overcoming apprehension towards financial constraints. I ultimately decided to go for it. I knew that my dream of going to Japan could be worked through, even though it appeared daunting at first.

One of the obstacles of training there is the necessity of managing my yen wisely. Tokyo is one of the most expensive cities in the world and I do not want to end up begging in the streets. I also need to adapt and work hard to make the most out of the experience both academically and socially. Japanese doctors devote much of their time on work and their patients, requiring serious commitment. Karoshi is part of Japan's work culture which literally means 'overwork death' was something

that was of concern to me, as I was afraid that I would be unable to cope with the stress. However, in reality they are actually proud to work very hard and it means that they have worked with dignity.

Professor Dr Yorozu, who is the first Japanese female Chairperson in Anaesthesia in this hospital was my clinical supervisor. She then introduced me to Dr Kunitaro Watanabe, who is the pain specialist in Kyorin University Hospital. Both of them guided me and were the personnel whom I sought for, when I need advice, opinion and solution. In Kyorin, the opportunities to learn are abundant and the doors are there to be opened.



*Dr Kunitaro Watanabe, Pain Specialist My badge of graduation
Miss Ogihara, my Japanese teacher*

My daily schedule consisted of preparing OT and giving anaesthesia, both peripheral nerve blocks (PNB) and general anaesthesia, for elective cases. I was usually assigned to thoracic, urology robotic and orthopaedic OT. The total number of PNB I performed for nine months were 262 blocks, the majority of them were paravertebral for truncal, interscalene for upper limb and femoral for lower limb block.

In the afternoon, I usually gave communication classes to medical students and nurses. Twice a week I need to attend Japanese class with Miss Ogihara, who is a student in this university. She is an English teacher in the making and is kind enough to mould me in becoming Japanese literate. I still think the language class was some of the best that I have received, and combined with the opportunity to test it out in the field, my Japanese language improved exponentially. Taking regular classes was a big stretch in my language ability. I only knew konnichiwa when I got off the plane but during my last month there I was able to have a simple Japanese conversation with my colleagues.

I attended conferences and presented posters, I even gave lectures in one of the conferences conducted for nurses. The Department of Anaesthesiology, Kyorin University Hospital hosted Japanese Cardiovascular Anaesthesia

2018 conference in Keio Plaza Hotel and I was given the chance to be part of the organising committee. It was an honour to help them to organize this international event. Invited speakers from USA and Korea were given slots for the plenary sessions. The most unforgettable moment was when I won the first place for poster presentation in the 46th Annual Meeting of Kyorin Medical Society. The prize was 5000 yen worth of Lawson card and a certificate. Another e-poster I presented was in Tokyo Anaesthesia Scientific Meeting in Shinjuku entitled Regional Anaesthesia Fellowship Training in Malaysia. Lastly, I gave a lecture in Perioperative Management Care Seminar for nurses in Roppongi Academy Hill. It was my pleasure to share the knowledge and from the feedback that I received, most of the participants appreciated my lecture.

At the end of my training, Dr Watanabe awarded me with badge of graduation with 'I'm good at PNB' printed on the badge. This is to honour me for doing PNB and for helping them out in OT. I also received a fellowship certificate from the University. I appreciate all these accolades and I was sad to think that I needed to leave them.



*Fifth year medical students
Japanese Cardiovascular
Anaesthesia Conference Ghibli
Museum, Mitaka*

Japan is a prosperous country and it was such a privilege to be exposed to new knowledge in the Land of Cherry Blossom. Besides the valuable experience, I also enjoyed making friends and received their warm hospitalities. They always invited me to dinner to celebrate the meaning of brotherhood. Friendship like this is a reward in itself and my time abroad has allowed me to make the connection. It was one of the best years of my life, and truly a transformative experience. I have carved all the fond memories in my heart. Arigato gozaimashita.



*Dinner with Professor Yorozu and colleagues
Anaesthetists of Kyorin University Hospital*

