

The Young Investigator Exchange Program in Paris: A Report at Necker Hospital

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It's my honor to study in Cardiology Department of Necker Hospital due to this exchange program. Professor Bonnet was very kind to permit me to learn anything I wanted to know at Necker and he advised me to visit Imagine Institute, where translational research for rare disease or unmet medical needs is done by using patient's samples and genetic approach. I was not only as a member of cardiology team at Necker, but also a visiting researcher at Institute Imagine. I spared much time in Imagine, while joining heart team at Necker. It was my great pleasure to know cutting-edge pediatric cardiology and learn translational research there. I had worked as pediatric cardiologist and young mitochondria researcher in Japan. So I had planned to study abroad in the near future and was allowed to study further in Paris. My aim during short period was to know translational research in addition to know pediatric cardiology better.

Dr. Khraiche kindly taught me pediatric cardiomyopathy at her cardiomyopathy clinic. She is an expert of pediatric cardiomyopathy and has many patients suffering from cardiomyopathy in France. To my surprise, they have different etiology such as genetics, inflammation, or metabolism. Her clinical approach was apparently excellent concerning echocardiography technique and genetic analysis. I joined many catheter intervention from PDA occlusion to valve implantation like Melody or Edward valve system, both of which are not available in Japan. I also watched a lot of cardiac operation such as modified Konno procedure for obstructive HCM and heart transplant for DCM, which I could never have seen in Japan. Dr. Yasmine, who was a young pediatric cardiologist and researcher, was very eager to guide me in Imagine and introduce me to many scientists there. Dr. Rotig, who is well-known as a brilliant mitochondria researcher, welcomed me at her mitochondria laboratory. I discussed her work related to the collaboration between Necker and Imagine and future plan for management of mitochondrial disease. I appreciate their help and kindness.

I also enjoyed French culture very much. Paris had many places to visit and French people looked friendly, kind, and nice. French food tasted very good and watching ballet or opera was great. I had to leave Paris earlier than expected due to my grant interview in Tokyo. I wish I could have been to Seville with you to attend the annual AEPC meeting. Fortunately I will study in Cambridge to collaborate with mitochondria researchers and cardiologists in UK from next spring. I'm looking forward to seeing you again in Europe soon. I appreciate all the things you did for me and I hope I could help you in turn.



An exchange program between AEPC and JSPCCS - My experience in Birmingham

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Thanks to the exchange program between AEPC and JSPCCS, I had a wonderful opportunity to study at Birmingham Children's Hospital (BCH) from March 18th to May 31st. Because this was my first time to study abroad, I was a bit nervous until I went to Birmingham. However, the cardiology staff at BCH was very kind and everything was comfortable during my stay.

Because I was interested in catheter intervention, I wanted to see as much catheter intervention as possible. BCH is one of the largest pediatric cardiac centers in the United Kingdom (UK) with about 550 cardiac catheterizations and about 600 cardiac surgeries per year. I was able to observe more than 70 cardiac catheterization cases during my stay. I was surprised that the basic technical methods of cardiac catheterization were very different from those in Japan. For example, they used the Gensini for diagnostic catheterizations at BCH. That was surprising to me because I am used to balloon tipped catheters in Japan (and I have never seen the Gensini before). Also, there were many cases of pulmonary atresia associated with a ventricular septal defect (PAVSD)/ major aorto-pulmonary collateral arteries (MAPCAs) at BCH. I was able to observe many of the interventional procedures in those cases, including PDA stenting and stenting for MAPCAs after unifocalized cases. Similarly, the Melody valve implantations in patient with PAVSD were also exciting. I could learn a lot from Dr. Oliver Stumper including theories and some tips and tricks of catheter intervention. He was not only a great interventionalist but also a wonderful teacher. Other than cardiac catheterization, I was able to attend many conferences. Those include surgical conferences, catheterization conferences, echo meetings, and ward meetings. Also, I was able to observe the outpatient clinic, ICU, and cardiac ward. Through these observations, I was able to learn about the medical care in the UK.

Also, I had a chance to attend the AEPC 2019 in Seville, Spain from May 15th to 18th. This was also an exciting experience for me. I was able to learn a lot at the congress and enjoyed my stay in Seville. Taking a walk in Seville with my colleagues has become a very good memory.

During my stay in the UK, I visited London (three times!) and Cotswolds. My great pleasure, especially was watching a Premier League football game in London. Those experiences gave me a deep understanding of the UK and British culture.

Finally, I sincerely grateful to Dr. Oliver Stumper and his cardiology staff at BCH. They gave me a wonderful experience and I was able to make new friends and contacts. I also am thankful to AEPC and JSPCCS for giving me such a wonderful opportunity.



Report of my experience in Motol Hospital

Naoki Masaki Miyagi Children's Hospital

I had the great opportunity to take part in the young investigator exchange program between the Association of European Pediatric Cardiology (AEPC) and the Japanese Society of Pediatric Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery, and was able to visit Motol hospital in Prague, Czech, from the 28th of May to the 5th of July, 2019. When I visited the hospital, all the staff warmly received my visit, and I started my study smoothly under the leadership of Professor Janousek. My study schedule was very flexible, and I was able to do what I enjoyed doing, which included surgeries, catheter examinations, and other cardiac examinations.

They have approximately 500 cardiac operations per year, with 6 attending surgeons performing these operations. All of them are very professional and have great skill, and I was deeply impressed through the observation of their techniques. They performed all kinds of surgeries, including heart transplantation and ventricular-assisted device implantation. Differing from Japan, there are a lot of cases with left heart disease, such as congenital aortic stenosis and coarctation, in Czech. During my stay, several Ross-Konnno operations, commissuroplasties of the aortic valve, and balloon valvuloplasties by catheter were performed, which I rarely experienced in Japan, and these operations were valuable experiences. Unfortunately, I did not see a heart transplantation or implantation of ventricular-assisted devices.

I found the language barrier difficult and am grateful for young doctors who helped translate. I took part in many conferences, which were very interesting and informative. The discussion between cardiologists and surgeons was very heated, and sometimes it took over one hour for a case! It was amazing.

Away from work, it was great to see Prague Castle and the Historic Centre of Prague, which is one of the World Heritage Sites. Prague is a very beautiful city full of art with multiple historical buildings. Additionally, it was a good experience for me to eat traditional Czech food, such as Svickova and Goulash.

Finally, I appreciate all the kindness of Professor Janousek, Professor Traskal, Dr. Roman, and all the staff in Motol hospital.





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Shizuoka Mt Fuji Children's Hospital



I travelled to Japan for a one-month traineeship at the Mt Fuji Children's Hospital in July 2018. The hospital is beautifully situated at the foot of the Japanese South-Alps in the city of Shizuoka, which is approximately 1 hour by a south-bound Shinkansen (bullet train) from Tokyo. During my stay I mainly focused on the peri-operative care in children with congenital heart disease and fetal cardiology.

The cardiovascular surgery department of the Mt Fuji Children's Hospital is a well-known center for congenital heart disease in Japan. Lots of complex congenital heart disease cases and children with arrhythmias are referred to this hospital. On the first day of my visit, I was warmly welcomed by the head of the department prof. Ikai and prof. Sakamoto, president of the hospital and of the Japanese Society of Pediatric Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery (JSPCCS). Furthermore, I was introduced to my mentor, dr. Osaki head of the cardiovascular care unit (CCU).

On a daily basis I would travel by bus from downtown Shizuoka to the hospital to attend the morning conference. Two times a week in a multidisciplinary setting many cases, including lots of second opinions, were thoroughly discussed for surgical-/interventional decision making. During these meetings, as one could imagine, language was the main issue I struggled with. Luckily, there was always a Japanese colleague willing to translate, making life for me much easier. Next I would join the perioperative transoesophageal echocardiography (TEE) or assist during a heart catheterisation. Furthermore, I attended the fetal echocardiography program and I even performed the first fetal echo's by myself. In the third week of my traineeship I was scheduled for a scientific presentation on the role of hemodynamics in congenital heart disease.

During the weekends, I explored the beautiful nature and cultural heritage of Japan and enjoyed the tasteful Japanese cuisine. I also appreciated the welcome dinner with the department and trip to Hakone that I made with Ms. Utsumi (secretary of the department) and dr. Yoshimoto.

I would like to thank all people that I have met during my stay at the Mt Fuji Children's Hospital. Due to their enthusiasm, the lively discussions that we had, and the ability to perform TEE and fetal echocardiography under close supervision, I was able to increase my knowledge in complex congenital heart disease cases. I also appreciated the excellent assistance of Ms. Utsumi who helped me a lot with the preparation of my visit to Japan.

Finally, based on all my experiences I could only encourage all AEPC junior members to apply for a traineeship in Japan. This certainly is a unique opportunity in our training to exchange knowledge in the field of congenital heart disease.

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