

“Integration and collaboration unhindered by demarcations enhances the local community's research ability.”

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Led by young researchers, a gathering for exchange and networking transcending specialization or affiliations

NAGOYA Global Retreat provides a forum for young researchers to publicize their research in collaboration with Nagoya University and other local academic institutions in Aichi Prefecture. Over one night and two days, researchers engage in presenting poster and oral sessions in English, partake of special lectures by famous researchers, and utilize opportunities for exchange and networking. Every year, about 200 scientists participate in this event. Originating as a Global COE Program*, it was founded by "Integrated Functional Molecular Medicine for Neuronal and Neoplastic Disorders." The retreat is very popular for its extensive program and the 10th annual event was held in 2017.

From the time it was founded, this retreat has tried to promote collaborative research that rises beyond the limits of university or research institution walls, helping to accelerate integrated research between basic and clinical fields and encouraging young researchers to broaden their perspectives. Originally, Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine held retreats with the Nagoya University Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, Aichi Cancer Center, and National Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology. Over the years it has expanded to a much broader network including the National Institute for Physiological Sciences, and Aichi Human Service Center. The initiative is characterized by the broad range of medical specialties represented, with participants from both basic and clinical medicine. Scientists from non-medical disciplines are also welcome and the door to open to anyone who has an interest in attending.

Organizers stem from diverse and multinational backgrounds comprising graduate and foreign students as well as clinicians. Young researchers in their late twenties to thirties are in charge—from the planning to moderation of the events and all the related operations, making for a truly multifarious program.

Encounters and exchange among different fields of specialization produce seeds for new collaborative research

Ordinarily, researchers gather in academic societies dedicated to their own specific field, limiting opportunities to network with other specialists. Scientists from diverse areas rarely interact in one place, so this retreat provides valuable and unique opportunities for unexpected discoveries that would have been impossible if the researcher had remained in his own laboratory. For example, interaction with people from other fields provides an unprecedented chance to learn about new technologies and experimental equipment that could never be encountered within the confines of their individual fields. By applying these new technologies and ideas to their own research, it would not be uncommon for a scientist to make exceptional progress. This retreat provided the setting for my own laboratory to share samples with a researcher from the National Institute for Physiological Sciences. Such friendly exchange among young academics can lead to opportunities for collaborative research.

These joint activities, especially between the basic and clinical sciences, have yielded many academic papers from the organizations that participate in this retreat, consistently producing solid results. It has allowed multiple institutions to win grants for collaborative research, generated many co-authored papers, and permitted researchers to engage in cooperation that extends beyond individual affiliations. All presentations and discussions are in English at this retreat and becomes an opportunity to build a foundation for international exchange and collaborative research. We are seeing more instances of young researchers actively taking part in other international events after being primed at this retreat.

Utilizing Nagoya's academically-rich locale to further enhance quality

Retreats are originally an American invention but they have now become quite popular with universities throughout Japan. However, our retreat is unique in the diversity of the scientists gathered here. We have people from both basic and clinical medicine, and from various research institutions, so our retreat has developed in its own unique way. One reason is the very special local environment in Aichi Prefecture where so many of the foremost research facilities in Japan are situated. Clinical medicine is the primary focus at Aichi Cancer Center, and National Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology, Aichi Human Service Center, whereas basic research is pursued at the National Institute for Physiological Sciences. All of these outstanding institutions are in the immediate vicinity of Nagoya University. Our university ties them together and holds this retreat, promoting an integration between basic and clinical research free of bias towards one or the other. When engaging in joint research, the advantages of geographical proximity cannot be overstated, and I personally appreciate how easily a researcher can commute between these facilities. Over these past 10 years, our retreat has impacted the quality of research at both our Graduate School of Medicine and other research institutions. The retreat is very highly regarded, but to make further progress in the future, we will need to increase not only the volume, but also the quality of resulting publications. To further fortify the research abilities of our graduate school of medicine and local institutions, and to lead innovation in Japan towards the future, we must aim for more interaction, improved exchange among various fields of research, and polish the content of our program. This retreat founded in Nagoya where basic and clinical scientists gather in a single setting, aims for collaboration among research institutions in the community to further augment the quality of the retreat and to ultimately improve our research abilities.



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*1/Global COE Program (GCOE)
GCOE was a Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology program which provided funding support to establish centers of education and research. These institutions would represent the apex of global excellence and foster highly creative young researchers who would go on to become world leaders in their respective fields. The Integrated Functional Molecular Medicine for Neuronal and Neoplastic Disorders was selected by the 2008 GCOE to receive a 5-year grant.