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The “Bridging Community Medicine and Innovations in Japan” program was a transformative experience that brought together the realms of community-based medicine and cutting-edge medical innovation. The program not only expanded my understanding of the Japanese healthcare system but also deepened my passion for global healthcare and patient-centered care.

Upon arrival in Nagoya, I was amazed by the University campus, medical campus, and the city itself. I remember how surprised I was by how easy it was to get around. During the first day of the program, the other participants and I were introduced to the rich tradition of Japanese medical education through a series of interactive learning experiences. From visiting esteemed professors to touring the campus and hospital, I gained an appreciation for the blend of learning that underlies Japanese medical education. For my lab tour that day, I chose to visit the Healthcare Administration lab. This was truly an amazing experience as I was able to speak with individuals from around the world and participate in an impactful discussion on aging societies. I was very grateful for the opportunity and happy that I was able to share my perspectives regarding the healthcare system in the United States.

On the second day, the program’s focus shifted to exploring innovative medical training at Nagoya University’s XR and IT centers. I was introduced to the integration of modern technologies, such as simulation training, into medical education. This experience highlighted the balance between traditional medical practices and modern innovation, offering a glimpse into how Japan is advancing medical education through technology.

The next two days focused on community-based healthcare, an aspect of the Japanese healthcare system that emphasizes personalized and localized care. We visited Kagayaki Clinic and split into teams for observing consultations in the surrounding community. This was an integral part of the program and where I witnessed firsthand the critical role of community healthcare in Japan. The in-depth discussions and interactions with local healthcare professionals provided vital insights into the importance of community-based practices within a country’s broader healthcare system. These experiences reaffirmed the significance of personalized patient care and inspired me to consider how such models could be implemented in my own country. The program also included a host of cultural immersion activities such as visits to historical sites, museums and city sightseeing. These experiences gave me the chance to explore Japanese culture and tradition, enhancing my understanding and appreciation of the cultural context in which Japanese medical practice operates.

The final day of the program involved collaborative case study sessions, where we presented clinical cases and engaged in peer-to-peer learning. This day also featured a truly amazing farewell reception that allowed us to reflect on the aspects of medicine we had explored throughout the week.

One of the most impactful moments during my time in Japan occurred while shadowing Dr. Ichihashi from Kagayaki Clinic. Our first visit that day was to complete a certificate of death for a patient. As Dr. Ichihashi worked, I noticed the patient’s wife watching me with intense curiosity. When the doctor translated her words, I was struck by her message: I bore a striking resemblance to a neighbor who had been very close to her husband when they lived in America. She said it felt like fate that someone with a face so familiar to her husband was present on his final day. Her words, coupled with the weight of the moment, brought tears to my eyes. This experience highlighted the human side of healthcare and the powerful role that emotional connections can play in patient care.

This encounter reaffirmed my commitment to medicine and emphasized the profound impact that a comforting presence can have on individuals. It also sparked a deeper interest in understanding global healthcare systems and their diverse patient populations. As I look to the future, my aspiration to pursue further international experiences has grown stronger. I believe exploring healthcare systems worldwide will enable me to contribute to shaping healthcare reform on a global scale.

Overall, this program was an amazing experience and one that I am incredibly grateful I was able to be a part of. Through a blend of academic lectures, hands-on experiences, and cultural immersion, I returned with a holistic view of medicine. This program not only enhanced my medical knowledge but also solidified my commitment to improving healthcare worldwide and ensuring that every patient, regardless of their background, receives the compassionate care they deserve.

