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Lab: Maternal and Perinatal Care

The Euro 2024 soccer match is background noise, the granddaughter turns her screen to show the cow video she was watching, the other family members smile. The eyes are dry, and they're prepared. You wouldn't even expect the grandfather just passed in the room next door.

When I applied for the program "Bridging Community Medicine and Innovations in Japan" at Nagoya, I did not know what I would remember most and keep in my pocket to return to as a future clinician. Through the incredible programming and lectures on the Japanese medical system and insurance, I learned a variety of information. The aspects that stuck out to me most, however, were the moments I was able to observe patients and providers in action.

On the first day of the program, I was immediately amazed by the immense geriatric population in Japan and the different forms of support that existed. When we traveled to Gifu, for our third and fourth days, and I was able to observe the care through home visits and lectures at the Kagayaki Clinic, I was amazed by the humanness that was present. From watching as a physician laughed with the patient and then translated it for us so we could laugh along too, to being present on a night call where the physician declared the death and I could feel the trust and great bond between the patient's family and physician, I couldn't help but feel anything but hope. Hope that all individuals could be treated this way, where the physicians are part of the individual and family's care. Hope that humor can exist for the entirety of a human's life. Hope that individuals won't die alone in their final moments. Hope that I would become a provider like them. Hope that more clinics could work to support the community holistically like the Hope (Kagayaki) Clinic.

The home visits and lectures were so meaningful, especially as someone with an interest in primary care and community health. However, some of my other favorite moments were related more toward pediatrics and maternal health, as that is what I'm leaning more toward in terms of practicing.

I was able to tour with three different providers in the Maternal and Perinatal Care lab. Dr. Sumigama explained to me the general system of care at the hospital and showed me the NICU and nursery. He, along with a pediatrician in the NICU, did a walk-through of every infant in the room and presented their case to me, so I could learn a bit more about each one. This was so immensely valuable, and also so lovely as the babies were very precious.

Dr. Sumigama connected me with an absolutely incredible OBGYN, who so kindly spent over an hour answering my many questions about the Japanese medical system and policy on various maternal/perinatal procedures. She showed me the MFICU and other areas of the OB ward, which allowed me to get a better understanding of how mothers are cared for here.

Lastly, Dr. Yamaguchi offered to walk me back to the classroom, but along the way, showed me the outpatient OB rooms and shared with me at length her experience in caring for women and her favorite parts of being an OBGYN. The way she explained her days, and what she was involved in, made me so excited to experience an introduction of that in my upcoming rotations. The most valuable aspect of our conversation was when she explained to me her work with individuals with Rokitansky syndrome, and how much of the work she does requires having honest conversations with patients, and sometimes their parents, about physical, emotional, and reproductive health.

This week in Nagoya was unlike anything I had imagined. All of the programming from the week helped me engage so deeply with information that I would not have had the opportunity to explore outside of this program. Additionally, outside of the content presented and the experiences shared, one of the most important aspects was the other individuals I was able to share these moments with.

It was a wonderful experience to work with other students from the U.S. and China, but most importantly, the Nagoya medical students. They were not only so kind, patient, and friendly, but they were also willing to answer any questions and help out in any way. From explaining their experience in training to helping us order food properly, spending time with the Nagoya students was one of the most special parts of the program to me. When my family asked my favorite parts of the program, I mentioned to them the home visits in Gifu, my lab tour, and meeting the Nagoya medical students. I was amazed by their, and all of the Nagoya staff's kindness and compassion, and am so grateful to have been a part of this program and have met them all.

