

Christi Candido

University of California, Davis School of Medicine | Second Year
Geriatrics Clinic

Overall Reflection: My experience in Japan was very transformative and it was one of those experiences that only happens once in a lifetime. If I could describe my trip to Japan in three words: eye-opening, insightful, and heartfelt. From the very first day we arrived in Nagoya to our last day, this trip impacted my future healthcare career. On the first day when we met Mika-san at Nagoya Station, everyone was very kind and helpful. Dr. Hasegawa was also kind and generous with his time in climbing that giant hill to our dorms on a very hot day. Not once did anyone complain about bringing us up that hill along with our luggage! From planning our itinerary to our flights and even our accommodations, everything was planned with our comfort level in mind. At the beginning of our trip, I honestly wouldn't have been able to take the public transportation on my own but we were all taught very well by Dr. Bustos, Dr. Hasegawa and Mika-San. As we met the students throughout the week, I felt it was easy to make a close bond with them all, including those who are from the United States. I can see myself as lifelong friends with everyone I met on this trip. I loved interacting with the Chinese and Japanese students as I learned more about their medical school training as well as their Healthcare System. I truly believe that innovation starts with everyone sharing their opinions, ideas, and beliefs. Most importantly, I learned so much about the Japanese Healthcare System and how they deliver patient-centered care. I want to deliver the same kind of care to my own patients. The hospitality that I experienced in Japan is what pushes me to do well in my studies and come back to serve alongside everyone!

Day 1: July 8th Monday | Exploring Medical Excellence and Interactive Learning Students

On the very first day, we received the lecture about the Japanese Medical System and a campus and hospital tour. Then, I got to meet my new classmates and was able to tour the Geriatric Clinic and Nagoya University Hospital. I was very impressed by everybody's level of communication skills and it made it easier for me to make friends with those who are around me. I was highly impressed by the director of the hospital welcoming us in person and giving us a historical breakdown of the hospital and where the medical school came to be.

After the brief lectures and tours, we had lunch at the school cafeteria! It was my first time in a Japanese cafeteria and I had such a fun time looking at the available options that I was able to eat. Everything was so delicious! After lunch, we got a tour of the Operating Room and I was able to observe an open pelvis/ovarian cancer removal. We even got to change into scrubs. It was impressive seeing the similarities to my medical education in comparison to the Japanese medical education.

Then, we received a tour at our designated clinic that we chose. Mine was the Geriatrics Clinic. The Geriatrics Clinic was located in the main hospital and we had a small tour of their work area as well as the wards. The lectures we had were led by Dr. Umegaki. It was an honor to meet him and learn from his lectures. His lectures were about the geriatric population in Japan and

the patients he sees in Nagoya. It was great to hear that there was a lot of research happening surrounding geriatric healthcare and how that can be applied to his patient care.

In the evening, we were able to partake in an exchange program party with medical students at Nagoya University. They ordered a lot of food, including pizza, sandwiches, and fried chicken. These were my favorite party foods! I remember it to this day that it was such an enjoyable night and that I met so many friends that evening. I was able to get close to all the students from the different countries and was able to connect with them on social media. I still talk with a few of them to this day!

Day 2: July 9th Tuesday | Innovation in Medical Training

Today, we had a lecture on the importance of innovation and how it's an integral part of the Japanese culture. We received multiple lectures about how Japan has been able to fuse traditional and modern medical education. It represents a significant advancement in training future healthcare professionals and how Japan has been able to shift their trajectory towards a growth mindset! The most fun part was when we went to the xR and IT centers! Dr. Fujiwara gave a lecture on how the xR center is helping future physicians to refine their technical skills. They are able to simulate medical scenarios to allow students the opportunity to react in real time. At this session, I was able to practice my laparoscopy through virtual reality and even learn about the history of how each tool has been made. It was a more immersive and effective learning experience! The IT center allowed students to practice procedures and enhance their clinical technical skills in simulated environments (there was a hologram and projection available in the operating room!). Additionally, hands-on research visits provide invaluable exposure to cutting-edge medical technologies and innovative methodologies, broadening students' perspectives and enhancing their adaptability in a rapidly evolving field.

I thoroughly enjoyed this day because when I initially think of Japan, I think of top-tier research and advancements in all categories: entertainment, science, medicine, and daily technology. This was what I was looking forward to the most and it met all of my expectations in regards to innovations in medical training.

Day 3: July 10th Wednesday | Community-based Medicine (Day 1)

On the third day, we traveled to a smaller town named Gifu and we woke up a bit early to ensure we arrived on time for our first round of patient visits. There, I met the Kagayaki Clinical Staff and was inspired from the beginning. Their open attitude and excitement to have us there made it easier to feel like I was part of their team. We started off with breakfast and a brief introduction about how the clinic came to be. It was during this time that I realized this type of clinic wasn't as common in Japan as I thought it would be. The Kagayaki Clinic was one of a kind and the energy that they brought to us truly inspired and empowered me to come back to Japan to help.

We were assigned different preceptors to do consultation observation in the morning. I was able to observe three patients that day. One with spinocerebellar degeneration, one with a diabetic

ulcer, and one with Idiopathic Interstitial Pneumonia (IDP). What I took from these experiences was that I was able to easily understand the context of the patients' lives at their comfort level because we were visiting them at their homes and meeting them where they were. They were very welcoming to us foreigners and I felt included as part of the care team during this day. I remember how the patient with IDP had a parakeet that she kept with her and I remember she encouraged us to say hi to her lovely bird friend. The generosity I felt with the patients was one to remember.

After the patient visits, we received an inspirational talk from Dr. Ichihashi and I felt as though I was already living the same sentiments he emphasized: "A predictable life is as good as lived." This phrase is how I truly live my life and I can't wait to see where the rest of this road will lead me. Perhaps back to Japan!

Afterwards, we went to visit CamCam Swallow, a restaurant that allows patients with dysphagia to enjoy traditional Japanese food. Food is such a central part of connecting with people around you, and this restaurant brings the colors, textures, and flavors as closely. It was amazing to watch them recreate full meals into something more accessible for patients!

In the evening, all of the students were taken on a traditional fishing excursion called the Ukai. Ukai is a traditional Japanese fishing method utilized by locals for over 1,300 years. They used a team of cormorants to catch fish from the rivers. Gifu is known for this practice! What a treat to experience this along with my peers! They even gave us a traditional bento dinner while enjoying the scenery. After the Ukai, we went to a bath house. I have never been to a bath house and the experience was unforgettable. I enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere of the bath house and will come back to Japan to try even more onsens!

Day 4: July 11th Thursday | Community-based Medicine (Day 2)

During this day we continued our journey in Gifu and explored a little town named Mino. Before we left to go to Mino, we started our day with a tour of the Kagayaki Clinic Lodge. I saw how one dream to provide extensive patient care turned and expanded into this beautiful clinic. After this, I was assigned with Dr. Ichihashi and another medical student to go do more patient visits! On this day, I was able to assist in a Deceased Persons Certification Exam. I checked for pupillary reflex as well as pulse and was able to help ascertain the patient's passing. It was an honor to be with their family at this sensitive time. However, it was their peaceful attitude that I truly felt throughout the visit, because they emphasized that their loved one's passing was "destiny". They were at peace. I truly am appreciative of this opportunity to even witness something as vulnerable as this! After traveling back from Nagoya, Dr. Ichihashi drove us to Mino to see the Mino Branch clinic. There, we spent time exploring, shopping, and eating food in the small town of only 1900 individuals! It was enriching to see the historical culture and my favorite was visiting the paper lantern museum. I also enjoyed eating the udon and taking pictures of what speaks to us for our "PhotoVoice" assignment.

After traveling from Mino, we received an insightful lecture about Home Dental Care by Dr. Kikuya. As mentioned, food is such a big part of the Japanese culture, and teeth play a

quintessential role in building community! Dr. Kikuya emphasized that patients who struggle with their teeth's health, especially during the palliative phase of their care, needs a multidisciplinary team to ensure quality of life. I truly believe that it takes a well-trained team of expertise to provide holistic care to patients.

Finally, before the night ended, we had a collaborative discussion/presentation about what we think and want the future of healthcare to be in our respective countries. We believed that in 10 years, we hope that healthcare in the United States becomes less insurance-focused. Though it was a serious discussion, it was filled with optimism because we knew we, as future physicians, could be part of the solution. This sentiment also applied to the other countries there! We're excited to carry the torch of "patient-centered" care into our future practices.

With all the serious topics left for the earlier part of the day, the Kagayaki Clinic staff planned a farewell party for us! They served sauteed eggplant, barbecued meats, and sashimi at every table. The display looked as good as it was delicious! That night was one to remember! As I sat with Dr. Kagayaki and his wife before the party ended, it was them that fed the desire to continue to serve those in need. They continued to inspire me to keep going and do well in my studies and to always live life as if each day was our last. 😊 I left there with my soul full, a full belly, and a full heart.

Day 5: July 12th Friday Advancing Medical Study

Sadly, Friday (July 12th) was our last day in the Nagoya University Summer Program. It was with a heavy heart that I awoke that morning, because I knew my adventure in Japan was ending. I met so many amazing students, faculty, doctors, and administrative/clinical staff. I re-emphasize this sentiment once again: I do not think I came back to the United States the same Christi. During the last few curriculum requirements (Final Discussion and Case Study Review), it felt as though time was moving so fast. I felt the longing to slow time down and keep learning with my peers in that very classroom where we first met a few days ago.

One assignment that I thoroughly enjoyed was during the Final Discussion/Presentations. Within my group, I was assigned to make a commercial emphasizing the importance of "Community Medicine." This assignment meant a lot to me because I was able to reminisce on the memories we recently made. I collected so many videos and photos throughout the trip that it was heartfelt to relive them one more time in Japan.

Dr. Bustos, Chizuki-san, and Mika-san heard my laughter as I put together different clips of the past few days together. It was a blessing to have captured this adventure of a lifetime and it is one that I will recount to everyone I come across! In that classroom, we started as peers, but we all left as lifelong friends. A part of me will always stay in Japan, at Nagoya University. It was the most transformative trip and I cannot wait to come back to Nagoya and reunite with all my friends and professors once again. I believe that those that I met there, regardless of what country they came from, will make a mark in the future of medicine. I am excited to see where everyone ends up and I am forever grateful for the experiences that I have had in Japan.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this happen!

