

Nancy Chen

Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, USA, 2025

Katsuno Lab – Department of Neurology

My summer in Nagoya was such a good and memorable experience. I really enjoyed learning about the healthcare systems in both China and Japan and comparing them to the U.S. It gave me the chance to start thinking about what ideas we could bring into the American healthcare system to improve the health of our people. I was fascinated by the differences in patient care approaches, the emphasis on preventive health, and the ways that community connections play a role in healthcare delivery abroad. Being able to see these differences first-hand made me think critically about what changes could be implemented back home to better serve patients.

One of the best parts was meeting students from all three countries and building friendships that I know will last a lifetime. We came from different cultures and educational backgrounds, but quickly found common ground in our shared interest in medicine and helping others. These conversations—whether about healthcare, food, or everyday life—gave me new perspectives and helped me grow both as a future healthcare professional and as a person. These connections now span across the globe, and it's amazing to think how this program brought us all together.

The trip to Gifu was definitely a highlight. Visiting the Kagayaki Clinic and seeing how rural healthcare works in real time was eye-opening. We were able to shadow physicians during their home visits, which gave me such a real and personal perspective on patient care in rural areas. It was inspiring to see how the clinic balanced limited resources with high-quality care, and how much trust existed between the physicians and the community. I also loved touring the children's clinic. The amount of care and thought that went into making the clinic a warm and welcoming place for kids—from the colorful décor to the child-friendly waiting areas—was so inspiring.

Another part of this program I really loved was getting to experience Japanese culture in such a hands-on way. Nagoya planned so many unique activities for us—from wearing yukatas, to watching *ukai*, a rural fishing technique that uses birds to catch *ayu*, to trying all kinds of local cuisine. These activities were not just fun but also gave us a deeper understanding of the traditions and values that shape Japanese society. Even simple things like walking through local markets, riding public transportation, or sharing meals with classmates became meaningful cultural exchanges.

This whole experience was truly once in a lifetime, and I feel so lucky to have been able to be part of it. I left Nagoya with new knowledge, unforgettable memories, and friendships that I will carry with me for years to come. More than anything, I came home with a renewed sense of purpose in my career path and a greater appreciation for the role of cultural understanding in providing the best possible care for patients.