

Grace Lian  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine / MS2  
Lab visited: Community Healthcare and Geriatrics  
Summer 2024 Experience Report

I had the opportunity to visit Japan for the 1<sup>st</sup> time through Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine's "Bridging Community Medicine and Innovations in Japan -- From Local Practice to Global Breakthroughs: Exploring Japanese Medical Advances" program this past summer. I first decided to apply for the program because it seemed like a great opportunity to go to Japan, but I quickly realized that the community medicine / geriatrics focus of this program aligned with my own aspirations. Furthermore, I knew that as a country with a super-aged population, Japan has had significant successes in advancing both community medicine and technological breakthroughs to improve patient care and training of future physicians. I knew that participating in Nagoya University's summer program would broaden my own approach to patient care in the future.

As an aspiring geriatrician or hospice and palliative care physician, I knew that this opportunity to learn from students, scientists, and physicians in Japan would be invaluable in providing me with innovative ideas and examples from a different healthcare culture, which I hoped would one day help me become an effective physician to our health system's older patients—those who are often overlooked and whose care is often inadequate.

It was a wonderful experience learning from other medical students from the US, Japan, and China. We had lots of opportunity to listen to lectures from some amazing physicians and scientists from both Japan and the US, as well as work in small groups with other students to discuss (and present on) topics related to the healthcare systems in our countries. The Nagoya faculty also did an amazing job organizing all our visits and sessions – they designed a fantastic, packed itinerary for us.

One of my favorite parts of participating in this program was the people I met. I am so grateful to the Nagoya medical students, who from day 1 made us all feel so welcome. We all quickly became friends, and some even traveled to Kyoto to spend the day with us after the program ended.

I also really enjoyed meeting Dr. Ichihashi, who welcomed us into his Gifu clinic. I will never forget the night when he was on call and had to travel back to Nagoya to issue a death certificate for a patient who had just passed away. Even though it was late at night, he immediately got ready to go and even invited a few of us students to go with him. At the patient's home (which the family so kindly allowed us students to enter), Dr. Ichihashi had us perform part of the physical exam to confirm death, and he shared with us the resources that patients' families are given as part of their end-of-life care. I also appreciate how kind and warm all the home visit families were. When they learned I was a medical student visiting from abroad, they were immediately willing to let me in on some of the most intimate moments of their lives as part of my medical training.

Outside of the program, I also had a couple days to do some of my own traveling. Some other cool experiences were visiting the Arashiyama Monkey Park in Kyoto, finding sushi and udon restaurants around town, walking through small alleys, and seeing a real-life Tokyo drift scene near Shibuya Crossing.

While my time in Japan was short, I really enjoyed my time there and I would love to go back one day to explore more. And as the patient population in the US also continues to grow older, I hope to take what I learned in Japan and one day be a part of an improved medical system that provides better care and community to its elderly patients and their caregivers.

