

Participation in an International Observership in HBP Surgery, Tenth Japanese Society of Hepato-Biliary-Pancreatic Surgery,

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I spent a year and nine months (from July 2015 to April 2017) studying in the US as part of the International Observership Program of the Tenth Japanese Society of Hepato-Biliary-Pancreatic Surgery. The former main host, Dr. Traverso of St. Luke's Health System, had retired, and I was trained by several new host doctors, including Dr. Kendrick of Mayo Clinic, Dr. Donahue of UCLA Medical Center, and Dr. Wolfgang of Johns Hopkins.

1. Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota

I studied at Mayo Clinic for one year. Minnesota is such a cold state that it's sometimes called the refrigerator of the US. In the winter, there are places where the temperature is between -20°C and -30°C. There are many Japanese people studying or working at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, and they stay in touch through the Mayo Japanese Society. I went there with my wife and three children, so I am greatly indebted to everyone in the Mayo Japanese Society and their families.

At Mayo Clinic, I did my training as a Research Fellow. I was able to do clinical research on the safety and feasibility of laparoscopic pancreatectomy and on radiofrequency ablation (RFA) of liver metastases in colorectal cancer. I participated in early morning and evening conferences on Mondays; the Journal Club early Tuesday mornings; and the Tumor Board and on Tuesdays and Fridays at lunchtime.

Usually, a research fellow only conducts clinical research (as the title indicates) and cannot enter the operating room. Owing to Dr. Kendrick's thoughtfulness, however, I was able to observe a laparoscopic Whipple on numerous occasions. In the laparoscopic Whipple, all procedures were done with laparoscopically, including a duct to mucosa pancreatojejunostomy. In particular, I was deeply impressed with the grip on the laparoscopic needle holder and the surety and speed of needle handling. In the abdominal surgery done in Japan, eight or more stitches are frequently used in a duct to mucosa pancreatojejunostomy, but only four stitches were used in Dr. Kendrick's laparoscopic Whipple, which I found interesting.

2. UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles, California

My family and I – five of us in all – spent a week driving from Mayo Clinic to UCLA Medical Center.

On the way, we enjoyed sightseeing at many national parks, including Mount Rushmore, Badlands, Devils Tower, and Yellowstone, and other places, such as Las Vegas. Despite some major difficulties, my family and I also made the memories of a lifetimes.

Los Angeles, a world-famous city, was full of things to see, including Hollywood and Beverly Hills. The climate is very comfortable, being warm year round and having good weather on most days, but with so many people and cars, the traffic jams were even worse than I had heard about. There were many immigrants, and owing to the many Asian people (Japanese, Korean and other), there is an abundance of ingredients for Japanese cooking.

UCLA stands for University of California, Los Angeles. With its blue sky, green grass and red brick buildings, the campus is truly beautiful. Sports are also thriving, so the campus is brimming with the vitality of youth. I spent six months at UCLA, mainly observing Dr. Donahue's Whipple at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. At UCLA, for a pancreatojejunostomy done with end-to-side invagination method, anastomosis is done using interrupted 3-0 silk sutures for the outer layer and continuous 3-0 PDS sutures for the inner layer. On Tuesdays I participated in Grand Rounds early in the morning and a pancreatic conference at lunchtime. On Tuesday afternoons I observed the outpatient department: nurse practitioners and residents comprehended and presented patient information, and staff doctors visited patients waiting in examination rooms. I felt that this system, which differs from Japan's, was interesting. It was impressive how often doctors shook hands with or hugged patients and their families during office visits or when obtaining informed consent; I felt it was their way of building trust. I did clinical research on the lymph node metastasis of pancreatic cancer and on the pancreatic cancer and preoperative images.

3. Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland

Because I was not able to obtain a J-1 visa for going to Johns Hopkins from UCLA, I temporarily returned to Japan, obtained a B-1 visa, and then transferred to Johns Hopkins. Having heard that Baltimore had safety issues and because my stay at Johns Hopkins was limited to three months with my B-1 visa, I left my wife and three children in Los Angeles and transferred to Johns Hopkins alone. Baltimore, and particularly the area around Johns Hopkins, is known to be unsafe, and there was a policeman stationed at every intersection around Johns Hopkins. Baltimore's main airport, stations, sightseeing spots, and the like are safe. Geographically, Baltimore is near New York and Washington D.C., making day trips by train possible.

At Johns Hopkins, I was able to observe various surgeries, including Dr. Wolfgang's Whipple, Dr. Weiss's hepatectomy, and Dr. He's robotic surgery. I was also able to observe Dr. Cameron, who is in his eighties, perform a Whipple and other pancreatic surgeries with residents. With Grand Rounds and conferences on the liver and pancreas, I participated in seven meetings a week. Using a database on liver metastases in colorectal cancer and in collaboration with the Department of Gastroenterological Surgery, Kumamoto University, I did clinical research on hepatectomy and RFA for colorectal cancer liver metastasis and on the effect of bevacizumab on

colorectal cancer liver metastasis prior to hepatectomy. Although I only stayed less than three months, it was very fruitful.

Overview

I participated in this International Observership Program from 2015 to 2017. Overall, I felt that as all of the host doctors were new, with Dr. Traverso and other host doctors who had been with the program from the beginning having retired, the educational system is not currently as rigorous as it was at first. There were no daily duties whatsoever, and participation in surgical observation, research, conferences and the like was entirely voluntary. For that reason alone, I went to work early every morning, attended as many conferences as possible, was friendly to the receptionists and nurses in the surgical area, and went to the operating room. I prepared as many papers as possible, but exchanging e-mails with the host doctors who are kindly reviewing them is taking time and is still a struggle.

I also really struggled with English conversation. There is no conversation without listening skills, in particular, and it wasn't possible to follow conferences and Grand Rounds even when I attended them. That was unacceptable to me, so I started English conversation on Skype and took lessons every morning while I was in the US. I also made it a point to talk about a variety of topics with a variety of people, including residents, students, and the parents of my children's friends. Studying English conversation is an enjoyable pastime, and I want to continue for life.

At the end of April 2017, I returned to Japan alone. My children, ages 13, 9 and 6, are still in school in the US so they can finish out the current school year. My wife and children plan to stay in Los Angeles until the end of this July. Being able to participate in this International Observership Program has enabled not only me but my wife and children to have wonderful experiences studying in and moving around the US that would not have been possible otherwise.

I would like to express my deepest thanks to the following people: Prof. Takada, Prof. Kawaharada, and Prof. Hanyu, who established this International Observership Program; Prof. Sano and Prof. Eguchi, directors of the International Exchange Committee and to whom I am deeply indebted; the numerous doctors who were former exchange delegates and helped me in various ways; everyone at the Secretariat of the Japanese Society of Hepato-Biliary-Pancreatic Surgery; and all of the doctors who are members of the Japanese Society of Hepato-Biliary-Pancreatic Surgery.

I intend to make full use of what I learned through this International Observership Program to give presentations at academic conferences in Japan and overseas, to continue writing English papers and reports, and to be useful even in the slightest way to medical care in Japan.



At Dr. Kendrick's house with Dr. Kendrick, his wife, their two grandchildren, my three children and Dr. Tomiyasu of Kumamoto Rosai Hospital



At Dr. Farnell's office

Toshiro Masuda, M.D.



With Dr. Donahue (left) and Dr. Girgis (right)



At Dr. Reber's office



At Dr. Reber's house with Dr. Reber, Dr. Donahue, Prof. Baba of Kumamoto University, Dr. Miyamoto and Dr. Miyata



By the operating room with Dr. Wolfgang



By the operating room with Dr. Weiss