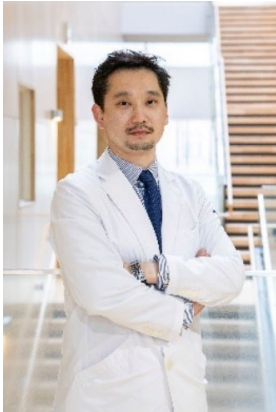


Report on the International Medical Exchange Program in Helsinki University



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From September 1-30, 2024, I had a great opportunity to visit Finland under an exchange agreement between Helsinki University and Sapporo Medical University. During this stay, I was able to participate in the clinical work at the Meilahti Tower Hospital under the supervision of Professor Karl Lemström from the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery.

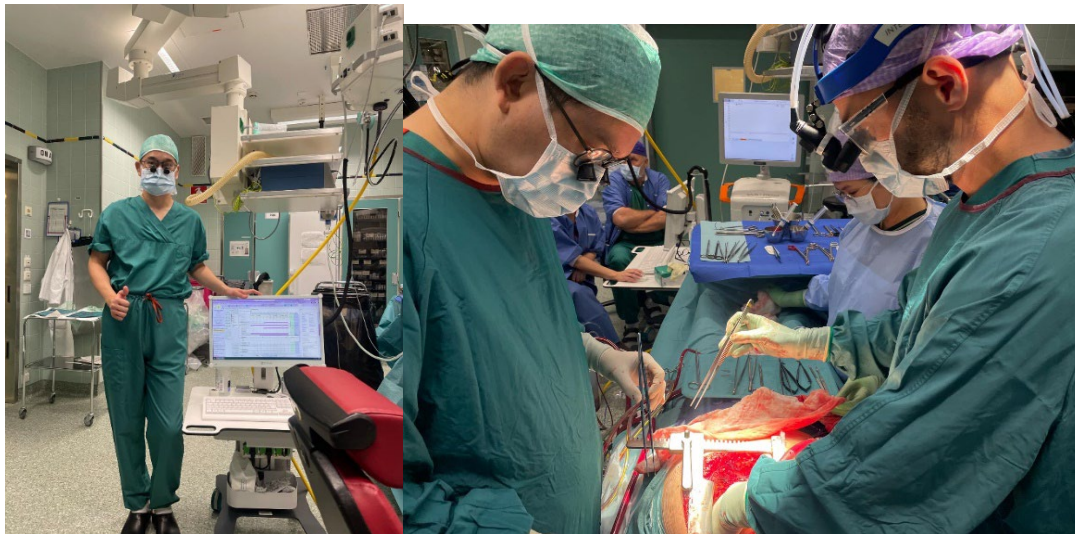


1. Why did you decide to do your fellowship/academic visit here in HUS Heart and Lung Center?

One reason I decided to visit the HUS was to contemplate my future career as a cardiac surgeon. The Japanese yen is depreciating, affecting the Japanese economy in various ways. Compared with Western countries, hospital working hours in Japan are extremely long, wages are low, and human relationships are complicated, often making it challenging for cardiac surgeons to feel fulfilled or happy. Therefore, I considered that through experiencing Finnish culture, which ranks first in the world for happiness (Japan is ranked 47th) and broadening my horizons and values, I would have an opportunity to reconsider whether I had the will and ability to continue working as a cardiac surgeon.

2. What were your expectations before you got here?

I anticipated observing heart transplants and ventricular assist device (VAD) implantations for severe heart failure, which are not performed at my institution. During my one-month stay, I was fortunate to observe adult and pediatric heart transplants, and VAD implantation and its management. With only five hospitals performing cardiac surgery in Finland and with consolidated clinical facilities, many surgeries are performed daily. I found HUS to be an attractive environment for trainee surgeons because they were able to observe and participate in a variety of experiences at one facility.



3. What was different from your expectations?

HUS is a high-volume center, and I was surprised by the number of operating rooms, including the hybrid OR, and the number of cases treated. However, unexpectedly, minimally invasive cardiac surgery (MICS) or robotic-assisted surgery was not performed, which I expected to be more common in Europe.

4. What kind of specialties/special know-how did you bring us to Finland?

Through many conversations with cardiac surgeons, I was able to discuss differences in surgical procedures between Finland and Japan (especially off-pump coronary artery bypass grafting and graft selection). In addition, as part of my clinical activities in Japan, I appreciated having the opportunity to present on the long-term outcomes of surgical treatments for chronic type B aortic dissection (Miura S, et al. JTCVS Open. 2024 May 28;20:1-13. DOI: [10.1016/j.xjon.2024.05.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xjon.2024.05.009)).



5. What did you learn in one month?

Through this short-term study abroad, I was able to acquire communication and discussion skills as well as the mindset to take constructive action as needed. Moreover, through directly experiencing the values, culture, and sociability of Finnish people, I realized how narrow and closed my environment was in Japan. As the saying goes: "The frog in the well knows nothing of the great ocean." I was able to learn about new outlooks and values and have a pleasant and positive experience that will be useful for my future life.

6. What did you find most interesting during your visit?

I found Finnish culture to be remarkably similar to Japan's culture in some respects. I was impressed by the fact that Finnish people are generally quiet, not overly talkative, punctual, and have good social manners in public spaces. The public transport arrives on time, there is no trash on the streets, and toilets are clean everywhere.

7. What surprised you?

I was surprised that most people did not work overtime and went home in the evening. I found the Finnish people were personally independent and proud of having a great work-life balance. In contrast, most Japanese people, including myself, work excessively. This makes it difficult for people to spend a lot of time with their families and feel happy in their daily lives. This attitude towards work has been considered a source of pride and beautiful culture in Japan, but through my stay at HUS, I realized that we Japanese should try to change the way we work, and that this is the most important thing for Japan to become a better developed country in which to live and work.

Lastly, I greatly appreciated the assistance of Professor Risto Renkonen and the financial support from the Paulo Foundation. This visit was an extremely valuable life experience. Thank you again for the opportunity to visit HUS.



Sincerely yours,
Shuhei Miura