
SPECIAL REPORT

Global Education: Experiencing Japanese Health Care And Culture Through UKM Outbound Mobility Program

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Ever since Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) signed the memorandum of agreement with Niigata University (NU) in 2009, several undergraduate and postgraduate students from both universities has been visiting NU and UKM through the student exchange programs. This year, three Doctor Of Public Health (DRPH) postgraduate candidates were fortunate enough to be chosen to conduct field attachment in Niigata Prefecture from 23rd November 2013 until 13th November 2013, which was organized by the International Health Division, Graduate School of Medical and Dental Sciences, Niigata University School of Medicine. These three weeks program covers various program involving governmental departments, hospitals, nursing homes and health centers.

TOHOKU UNIV-NIIGATA UNIV EXCHANGE MEETING

The meeting between the two universities was held on 6th - 7th December 2013 in Niigata University

itself with the theme of ‘Seminar Program in Influenza & Other Respiratory Viruses’. This annual program is attended by teaching staffs and postgraduate students from both universities with the objective of sharing knowledge and study outcomes as well as exchanging views.

Various research topics presented orally during the two-day seminar. The students got to learn about the public health aspects related to influenza and other respiratory viruses in various countries such as Japan, Vietnam, Phillipines and Myanmar besides from our own country as well. The students were also invited to make an oral presentation during the seminar. Dr Mazlina Mohtar shared experiences in implementing 1 Stop Centre For Health program in Melaka. A PHD student from UKM, Dr. Rohaizat Mohd Hassan also presented the results of his research on influenza in Hulu Langat, Selangor.



Figure 1 Attending the Seminar Program on Influenza & Respiratory Viruses



Figure 2 Presentation during the seminar

LABORATORY TRAINING DEMONSTRATION

On Friday, November 27th 2013, the students had the opportunity to learn techniques to detect influenza virus using the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) at the conventional laboratory in the Department of International Health, Niigata University. Two PhD students from the department, Mr. Clyde Dapat and Mr. Akinobu Hibino explained the procedure and demonstrated

very carefully and clearly using blood samples from a study being carried out by them. Through these activities, the students could learn about the equipment and the amount of time needed to perform conventional PCR test as well as the cost of each test. They were also thought about the things that should be avoided during laboratory procedures to ensure that the test results to be accurate.

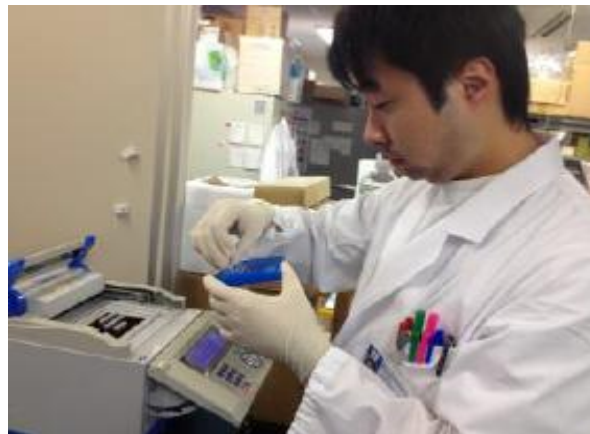


Figure 3 PCR laboratory training & demonstration

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS) TRAINING

A training program on Geographical Information System or GIS was held for two weeks where this program was one of the main programs planned for the students during their visits in Japan. Trainer for the GIS was Dr. Tsubasa Suzuki. The training was held based on the module from the book "GIS: Essential Skills" by Gina Clemmer. Training that has been implemented including (1) Introduction to ArcGIS applications; (2) Build a map using ArcGIS applications; (3) Incorporate information and map data using ArcGIS and (4) Using GIS applications in the medical field.

GIS training program is very helpful in the field of public health. GIS can produce things such

as (1) Display of integration between factors that influence the spread of a disease by the time element to produce the model development; (2) Develop a model that can be used to identify areas of high-risk localities that can trigger a disease. This can ensure more accurate prevention and control of diseases that will be implemented based on time and location; (3) The model produced will be used as the base model to facilitate and improve the effectiveness of prevention and control of infectious diseases. The students were given a computer and books to be used during the training. They found the exercises to be very beneficial to them as potential public health experts and they were looking forward to sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues to use ArcGIS applications in the medical field.



Figure 4 GIS training

NIIGATA CITY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICE VISIT

The students were brought by Associate Prof Dr Yugo Shobugawa for a visit to Niigata City Health Office on 27th November 2013 from 9.00 am to

12.00 noon. They were greeted by Niigata City Health Director Dr. Tsukioka and several other officers. At the office, they were briefed on the Japanese Health System and health status of Japanese society.



Figure 5 Visit to Niigata City Public Health Office

Japan is a developed country that has a problem of large number of older generations while having small numbers among the younger generations. Japanese people have the longest life expectancy in the world at over 79.6 years for men and 86.4 years for women. Cancer is a major killer of Japanese society. The students had the opportunity to hear the presentation by officers in the Department, Miss Sakai regarding Niigata City Health Promotion Project. Dr. Tashiro gave a lecture on cancer screening for gaster /stomach cancer and on the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Disaster in 2011 due to the Tsunami. Miss Koderia shared information on the current status of the problems faced by victims of Niigata Minamata Disease.

At the end of the session, the students were given the opportunity to visit The Niigata City Health Centre, located within the same

building. The Health Centre is only opened after office hours up till 9 in the morning and for 24 hours during the weekends and public holiday. The services that are offered by this Health Centre includes emergency and outpatient services. In Japan, even the outpatient service is offered as subspecialty services. Through these visit sessions, the students managed to learn about the structure of the health services in Japan, one of the developed countries and also about the benefits and challenges in implementing health programs. In addition, the disclosure of nuclear accidents and Minamata Disease has opened the student's views to a new paradigm. All information and experiences that have been shared by officials in Niigata City Health Office is very useful since that kind of unique experience definitely not available in Malaysia.

VISIT TO NURSING HOME “SEKIYA OMOTO EN”

Health care for the elderly in Japan are managed by the hospitals, government funded nursing homes, private sector and Day Care Centre. On December 9, 2013, we had the opportunity to visit Senior Citizens Daycare Center Sekiya Omoto En in Niigata City. The students were very excited to be greeted by the very friendly elderlies and the workers even though there was communication problems due to language barrier.

The center is equipped with modern, practical and high-tech rehabilitation equipment.

The staffs in the nursing center are nurses who have been trained in the care of the elderly. The center provides a variety of activities for the elderly who live alone in the house while their children go to work during office hours from 9 am to 4.30 pm. They will be picked up by the nursing center in the morning and returned to their homes in the evening using a special elderly-friendly van. We were informed that there was a long waiting list to sign up for this center, as places are limited. Fees to participate in activities here are borned by the Special Senior Citizens Health Insurance.



Figure 6 Activities at Sekiya Omoto En Nursing Home

The students also joined the activities at the nursing center doing light exercises, singing national Japanese songs and had tea while socializing with the elderlies. Besides that, they also visited the nursing home that is located at the higher floors within the same building as the daycare center. The facility is provided for the elderlies who are homeless, has schizophrenia, has chronic diseases and those who stays alone or not taken care of by family members. Senior Citizens Health Care System in Japan is one of the best models that can be used as example. This is because their communities have a high rate of older generations, has practical rehabilitation technology and the insurance system is well managed. It is hoped that the experience and knowledge gained here can be used to improve Senior Citizen’s

Health Care System in Malaysia thereby improving the health status of the elderly

VISIT TO UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

The last program was a visit to Niigata University Hospital, Niigata University. The hospital is located adjacent to the Niigata University building and the hospital provides health services to all residents in Niigata Prefecture. The students visited the specialist clinic, radiology and pharmacy units and were impressed with the dispensary system, preparation and storage of medicines in the pharmacies using a very practical, user friendly system and method of storage with optimum space utilization. Radiology Unit also has a state of the art machines with a sufficient number and area of interventional radiology which has progressed well in Japan.



Figure 7 Doctor Heli air medical services

The students felt very fortunate to be able to visit the air medical service or the Doctor Heli where this is a medical service using a helicopter. This service is like 'air ambulance' where it is used as the emergency service, provided to the people in remote areas which is far and hard to reach from health center. The systems and the technology used by the Japanese government in the delivery of health services to the community is a very practical, high-tech, easily accessible and user-friendly. This is one of the key factors that maintain the health of the Japanese people to be among the best in the world in addition to the discipline, morale and attitude factors which are commendable as well. Civil servants health services in Malaysia should emulate Japan in an effort to improve the health status of the community. It is hoped that the healthcare services in Malaysia will improve towards a more advanced services that will improve people's health status so that it will be equivalent to developed countries like Japan.

ATTENDING LECTURES

There were a few lectures that were scheduled for the students while they were in Niigata. The lectures were by Professor Saito, Professor Nakamura and Professor Sone. Professor Dr Akihito Saito is a pediatrician from the Pediatrics Department at the University of Niigata, Japan. In his talk, he explained about the health of children in Japan and major diseases among children in Japan. He also describes in detail the implementation of vaccination system in Japan. In general, the vaccination system in Malaysia is more

comprehensive than in Japan. However, he explained that they were in the process of moving towards a more consistent and comprehensive vaccination program just like in Malaysia.

Professor Kazatoshi Nakamura is a professor in the field of Preventive Medicine and he is an expert in Vitamin D and its importance for the prevention of osteoporosis. He also gave a lecture on the associated factors that contributes to the life expectancy of Japanese society in general and the health status of Japanese society. He also explains about the Japanese diet containing foods high in protein because they are seafood-based and the importance of a diet containing vitamin D as well as its impact on health and life expectancy of a person. His lecture was enlightening to the students regarding the importance of vitamin D in human health and disease prevention.

Professor Hirohito Sone is a professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, Hematology, Endocrinology and Metabolism Unit. His lecture was mainly about Diabetes Mellitus which is the main disease affecting the people of Japan. He also describes the factors that contribute to diabetic disease in Japanese society. Most of his research has been published in international journals and other high impact journals. He was very interested in studying diabetic disease in Southeast Asia and contributing factors of this disease among the Asian community. The students were very fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to hear his lecturer and renew their knowledge about diabetes and also to learn about the preventive measures that are being implemented in Japan.



Figure 8 Lecture by Prof Akihito Saito

STUDENTS PRESENTATIONS

A proposal presentation was held at the Department Meeting Room, chaired by the head of department, Professor Reiko Saito. During this session, the students had the opportunity to share their research

PROPOSAL

proposals and got feedback and constructive comments from Professor Saito and Associate Professor Dr Yugo Shobugawa. All comments and shared information can help us improve our proposal.



Figure 9 Memorable moments with the members of International Health Division

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the visit to Niigata University was a very beneficial program to the students in terms of academic and related activities associated with the learning culture of Japan. Among the advantages and benefits that were gained were about the uses of the ArcGIS software to map health problems, learning about Japanese population health status in general and the people of Niigata in particular

through visits, lectures and discussions, learning about influenza surveillance system in Japan, had an experience to observe the PCR procedure in detecting influenza virus, the opportunity to see and learn the way how to manage seminars by Japanese staffs and students and experiencing the great and fascinating Japanese culture. We would like to thanks UKM for funding our great education journey.