

SCORE Exchange report – Hamamatsu University School of Medicine, Japan

July 2017

General impression: To whom it may concern, I recommend this exchange with my full heart! Let us see, what were the main reasons, why I have enjoyed so much ;)

Research – what have I learnt, how was the lab?

Top notch research! If you decide to pick Hamamatsu as the place to do research in, you HAVE to choose something related to optics/photonics/medical imaging – because: [Hamamatsu](#) is the famous producer of the optical sensors, and in 70% of worldwide PET, there is Hamamatsu technology inside!!! Go for it! :D So I ended up at the Department of Photomedical Genomics, Institute for Medical Photonics Research, Preeminent Medical Photonics Education & Research Center at the Medical University... Yes, the name is intentionally that long – principal investigators and professors are very proud of it. They get aaaaa looooot of money as funding for their research from the Hamamatsu company, and they are indeed very good in what they are doing. And there are several noble prizes related to it ([Super Kamiokande](#), [CERN](#), [Laser](#))...

Ok, so how about the whole experience in the lab, the project and other funny stuff?

The first day I came to learn the researchers, I admit I was a bit astonished as they were all above 40 let's say... What you don't see in European labs, where only PhDs, Master students and young principal investigators are rushing around the rooms with cell culture, mass spectrometry, PCRs... I concluded the reason may lie in the Japanese mentality – deepest respect towards another individual avoids the [firing](#) of the non-competitive workers in the competitive field. Then I was assigned to the project about genes in age-related macular degeneration under the supervision of Dr. Ohishi. I learnt a lot of interesting lab techniques and the theory behind, but let's keep it short so we'll focus on stuff that you do not experience in just any lab. For example, you are collaborating with your supervisor and he wouldn't tell you which genes exactly you're working with. OK, I understand, you can steal the idea as an exchange student, who only comes to fetch the knowledge and doesn't bring much... (I got a detailed explanation of the whole thing in the second week, after he decided that I am quite trustworthy). This may be quite a good reason not to tell about your discovery to anyone, especially if you're working in this lab, where the pace of daily lab practice is sooooo slow! I mean, I am still undecided if this is better than the whole rush in European labs where mistakes are more often... Perhaps such slow pace lies in the tea which our secretary prepared every day!

The lab has already hosted 2 IFMSA students so far, which on one hand means they are good in supervision of international researchers (there was also a PhD student, an ophthalmologist from Bangladesh), and that the lab knows how to warmly welcome new incoming students from the past experience. I was also a part of this. Although, this might be the Japanese culture while treating the guest! As well as being perfectionist is! The very last day in the lab, I need to wait

till 8pm so I could have obtained my IFMSA certificate and the signed logbook, because they kept on improving the comments, asked me to rewrite the logbook in nicer handwriting etc... xD

In conclusion, one learns a lot, especially Japanese, but people do speak English very well ☺

Social programme and University – students, cultural experience!

Students were great, very responsive and always ready to help! The only pitfall was that in July they all have final exams... But ok, they still took some time to organize the welcome dinner, go to karaoke with us, took us to the city centre so we could have bought a sim card (30€ for 1 GB Data was the cheapest!!!), then gyoza dinner, the farewell party, and this was it. Further social programme was self-organized, on weekends I have been travelling with the only other exchange student in Hamamatsu, Judit from Barcelona. We went to the nearby Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Tokyo, we have climbed Mt. Fuji, we went to swim in Onsens and waterfalls on the peninsula Izu... Great time! But what I also adored was that during the week we could have taken part in all the sports activities at the University. After lectures, each and every medical student goes to train a certain sport. University owns 2 gym halls (big one for basketball and other ball sports as well as badminton and fitness; martial-arts hall), a swimming pool, baseball court and football field, tennis courts, Japanese archery (kyudo) hut... And so we went to see and to try out some of these sports ourselves!

Accommodation... So I stayed in a student dorm for international students. It was a rather old place, but every room has its own toilet, kitchen, balcony and AC. Not a shower, however. For this we needed to pay about 70 cents each time for a 15min shower. At the end of the exchange, Judit and I discovered, we could actually shower at the swimming pool and save money this way hah, as if Japan was not expensive enough :P! Well, it isn't that bad, actually, prices are quite European or even lower (especially for such high quality food!!!), apart from the transport... A one-way ticket from Hamamatsu to Tokyo by Shinkansen was 70€ (it is a 2h ride). True, true, it is about 300km, and time is money... but still xD

Concluding remarks: this exchange was so awesome. Nothing else to say :D Oh, by the way, if you want to stay tuned, this is the link you can subscribe to:

<https://japaaan17.blogspot.co.at/>

Stay tuned ;)