

JSPS Fellows Experience – Jennifer Acton

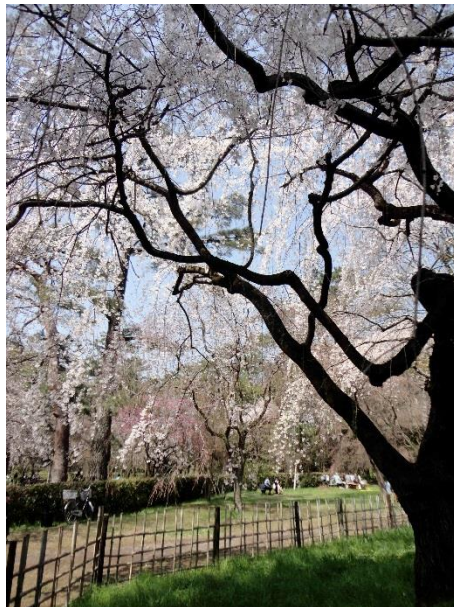
I undertook my fellowship at the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Kyoto University, for one month, hosted by Prof Nagahisa Yoshimura. My research involved an examination of retrospective clinical data in patients with the eye disease, polypoidal choroidal vasculopathy (PCV). PCV is seen in about 10% of cases in the UK, but in Japan, it is ubiquitous. The study evaluated the visual field loss in the macular area (defined by microperimetry) and the relationship to retinal lesion characteristics, using spectral-domain optical coherence tomography images. I was able to observe in the patient clinics and in doing so, learn a great deal on clinical interpretation.

My hosts were extremely kind, putting on both welcome and farewell parties. Other members of the team included Dr Ken Ogino and Dr Yumiko Akagi, who were very helpful in providing academic support. As a foreigner, one of the challenges was navigating the kanji on the medical records and computer systems. Whilst Google Translate was useful for finding crucial meanings, like the difference between 'save' and 'delete', it was never any trouble to ask for help, when copy & paste were not possible.

I will never forget one particularly considerate individual, a clinical technician called Yuko, who didn't really speak any English. Through hand signals and drawings, managed to understand and solve an instrument software problem, pivotal to my project. She was rather pleased when I gave her some Welsh fudge, in turn, I was touched when she returned a gift of Suzu Monaka, a speciality from her home town. I was very glad to have been advised in my Japanese class beforehand, to bring a few small gifts from your country, for your hosts and others.

My short stay in Japan was absolutely delightful, made especially enjoyable by the stunning weekend sightseeing and delicious food, with excellent recommendations from a ramen blogger (<http://www.ramenadventures.com/p/food-tours.html>, mostly based in Tokyo, but other cities included).

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Kyoto, Sakura