

UK-Japan symposium “Cell competition in development and cancer”, 14th of February 2018, Christopher Ingold Building, University College London

The aim of the symposium was to disseminate the theme of “cell competition”, as this is a new and emerging field of research in development and cancer.

The objective was to identify the fundamental mechanisms for cell competition in different model systems and to promote bi-directional collaborations between the UK and Japanese scientists.

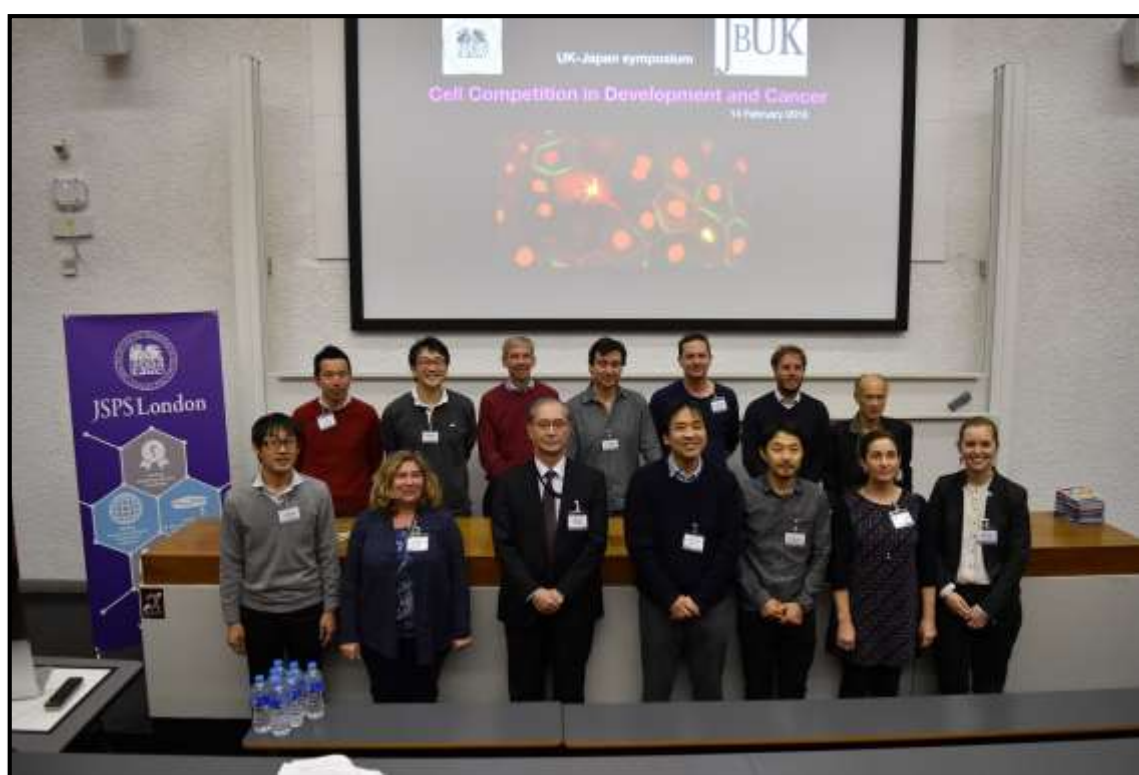
The theme of this symposium was “cell competition”, an interactive process between the two distinct populations, which applies to a variety of biological processes in development, cancer and stem cell biology. Therefore, this topic has a strong impact on both basic and clinical science at the interface. Ultimately, this concept could inspire us to develop novel therapeutic applications for cancer prevention.

We, the organizers, attempted to invite young, excellent scientists from Japan (Prof. Tohru Ishitani from Gunma University, Dr Yoichiro Tamori from the National Institute of Genetics in Japan and Dr Shunsuke Kon from Hokkaido University), who were directly supported by the JSPS London, along with senior scientists (Professor Tatsushi Igaki from Kyoto University). Likewise, we invited good speakers at early stages of their career in the UK (Drs Alan Lowe and Katarzyna Anton from University College London) as well as established researchers (Professor Eugenia Piddini from Bristol University, Dr Tristan Rodrigues from Imperial College London, Dr Jonathan Chubb from University College London and Dr Phil Jones from the Sanger Institute). This resulted in a very successful symposium, in that excellent talks were given with enthusiasm and invoked inspiring questions to be asked in a positive spiral, thereby the sessions finished with lots of questions remaining to be answered. In addition, to resolve the remaining questions, the attendees all had continuous discussions during the coffee break and at the reception with refreshments. This scientific atmosphere was certainly appreciated by the scientists whose expertise is slightly distant to the field of cell competition. Reflecting on this, we received lots of feedbacks from those scientists, expressing their interest in attending a symposium on cell competition in the near future.

Having a long-term collaboration between two of the organizer’s laboratories (Tada and Fujita labs) as since receipt of a Royal Society International exchange scheme award in 2012, we have been establishing a good network between the UK and Japan, disseminating research results on the topic of cell competition. Prof Fujita holds the JSPS research grant (Kakenhi) for scientific research on the topic of “cell competition” (Ref: 26114001, FY2014-2018) and is the Principle Investigator, reflecting the fact that the Japanese researchers have already established a good network amongst them. Indeed, this contributed partly to the success of this symposium. In contrast, there is no such existing network in the UK, although Drs Rodriguez and Tada had some communication. Through this symposium the UK researchers were inspired to firstly establish such a national network in the near future; for example, through organizing an annual meeting on cell competition in the UK as in Japan. To support this, Drs Lowe and Chubb, both new faces to this field of research, would like to be involved in this community. Thus, we think that the establishment of national network is a prerequisite for developing into the UK-Japan collaborations.

To promote bi-directional collaborations between the UK and Japanese researchers, Prof Fujita organized an international symposium on cell competition in Sapporo in 2017, whereby Prof. Piddini, Drs Rodriguez and Tada attended. Complementary to this, Drs Rodriguez and Tada are planning to arrange a session of “cell competition” as part of the meeting of the British Society for Developmental Biology (BSDB) in 2020. Hereby, we would like to invite some Japanese researchers to this event to facilitate potential collaborations between the scientists from the two countries. Together with the vision of increasing populations working on cell competition in both countries, this approach will potentially establish new collaborations between the UK and Japanese researchers.

-Dr Masazumi Tada, University College London



Speakers and Organisers