

Host: Dr Yoshiaki Kawano, University of Kumamoto

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I have received my JSPS fellowship to perform a study that we have initiated with a Japanese colleague during his work at Imperial College and which we wanted to continue despite our current labs being 6000 miles apart. In addition to this work, I have planned a visit to two other Japanese Universities, where two prominent scientific groups are working in my field of interest. To date I have known them only by publications and I was really keen to meet them in person, share our views and ask for expert advice.

The first part of my visit I have spent in the University of Kumamoto in the laboratory of Dr Yoshiaki Kawano. Before the visit we have planned the experiments that we would carry out, so we could start working from the first day. The data obtained during the visit provided us with some additional clues for determining of the actual scale and the experimental conditions that are planned in future. In addition to lab work, we had some time to discuss the ongoing and plan future projects and applications, which was very helpful, as it is often easier to do it face to face rather than by email. We also had time for drafting research papers that we intended to publish based on previous results. During the visit I have made a lecture on the topic of my research and our collaboration followed by meetings and discussions with many university researchers in the faculty of the Life Sciences.

Following the visit to Kumamoto, I have visited Professor Yoh Takuwa, Kanazawa University Graduate School of Medicine. Prof Takuwa is a renowned specialist with over a 100 publications in my field of research. I have made a lecture showing our last unpublished data and we were discussing potential studies that we could conduct in collaboration between University of Kanazawa and Imperial College London. In particular we have discussed the usability of transgenic mice that Prof Takuwa has developed.

Following the visit to Kanazawa, I have visited Professor Takashi Murate, School of Health Sciences, Nagoya University. Prof Murate is a key researcher in the field of transcriptional regulation of enzymes involved in lipid signalling. Our joint interests lie in the field of elucidating the molecular mechanisms of enzyme regulation in cancer cells and identification of new molecular targets for cancer therapies.

Overall, I think this was a unique opportunity to interact with Japanese colleagues and visit several scientific groups working in my field of interest. There were many productive discussions with scientists and PhD students, which led to several new ideas, which we may implement in future. I had a very warm welcome from all my hosts and after long productive days we had very nice evenings going out with an incredible Japanese hospitality.

In practical terms, it is helpful to learn some basic Japanese phrases, as they may help you in the shops, taxis, etc. Most signs are doubled in English, so usually there are no problems with directions. The Japan rail pass is very convenient if several local trips are planned (much cheaper than buying single tickets, available only online, need to buy before the trip).

