

IMPERIAL

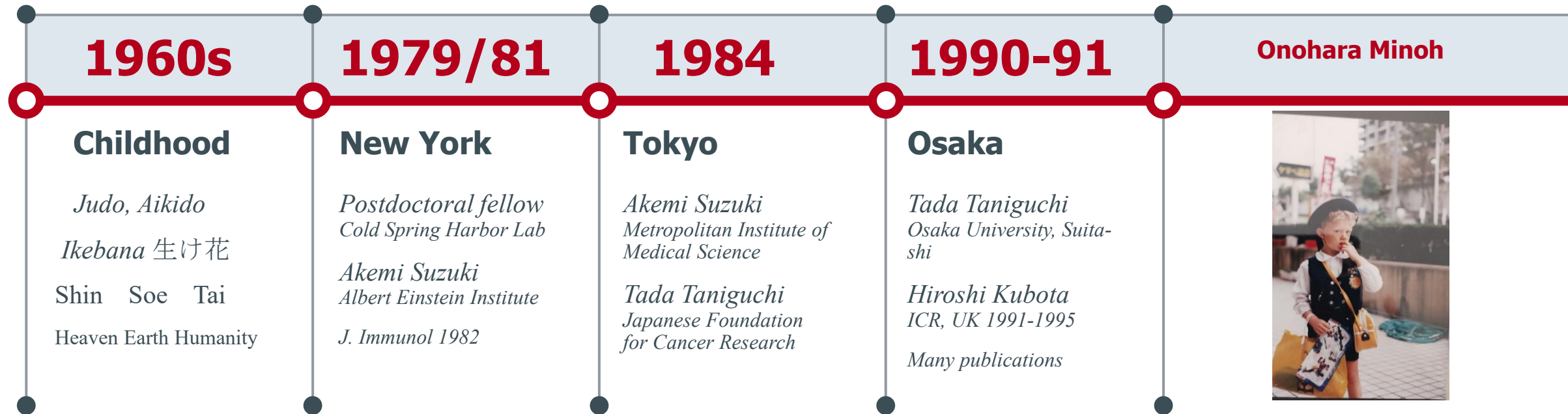
JSPS Workshop

Predeparture talk

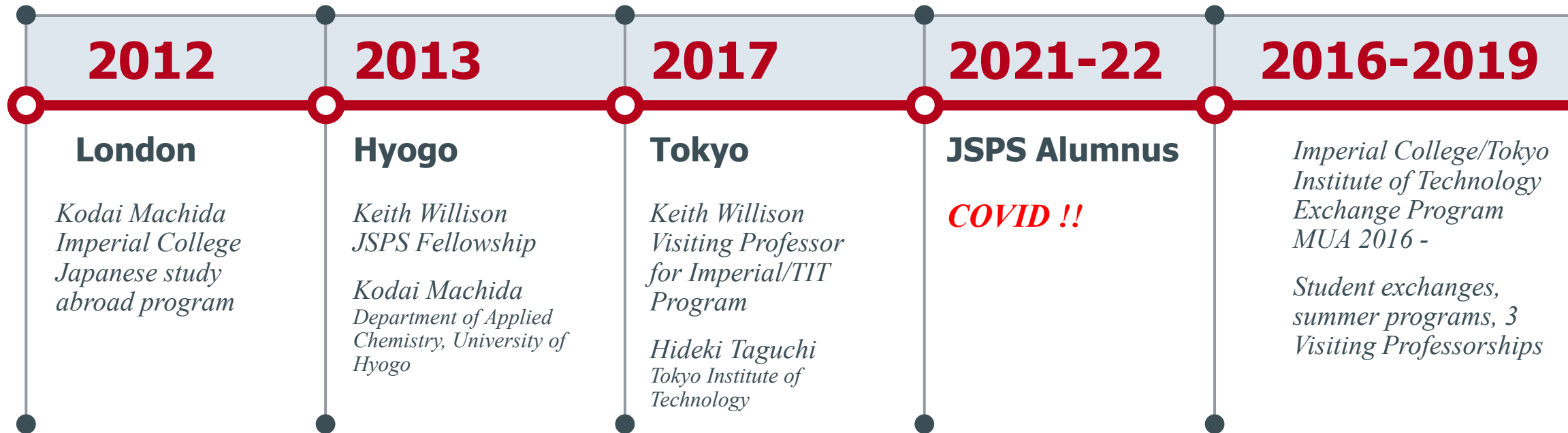
Prof Keith Willison

04/11/2025

JAPAN PHASE 1



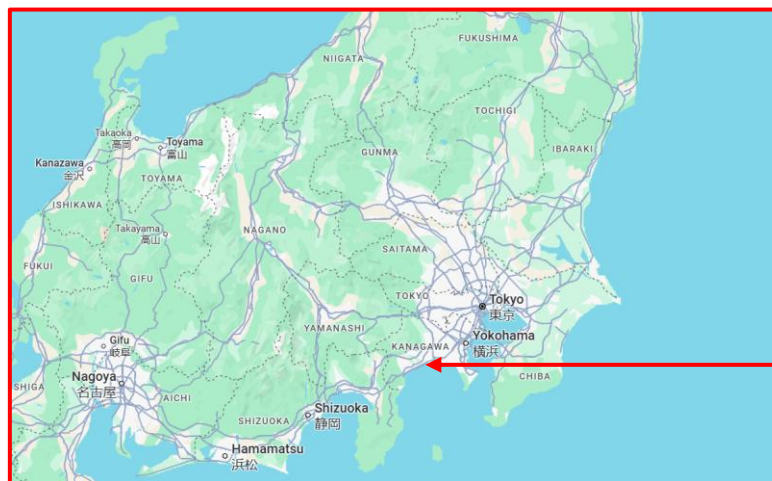
JAPAN PHASE 2



Matt Reynolds Ph.D
Principal Scientist
Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Ltd.



Shonan, Kanagawa, Japan



Kamakura

iPark



Yokohama

View from iPark

January 2018

October 2021

October 2022



Moved to Japan (Takeda Pharmaceutical, Shonan)
Postdoctoral Research Associate
Drug Discovery Chemistry Laboratories
Neuroscience Drug Discovery Unit
(Contract researcher)

Made permanent research staff member
Research Staff
Asia New Chemical Entity Laboratories
Neuroscience Drug Discovery Unit
(*seishain* - 正社員)

Promoted to Principal Scientist
Principal Scientist
Global Chemistry (Shonan site)
(*seishain* - 正社員)

IMPERIAL

JSPS Workshop (Part 2)

Predeparture talk

- Prof Keith Willison
- 04/11/2025

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Tip 1: If any of the scholars have very limited Japanese ability, I would strongly recommend learning katakana over hiragana in the first instance. As most of the katakana words are just the transliteration of **English** words, knowing the katakana script will help them with words like hotel (ホテル), credit card (クレジットカード), ramen (ラーメン) and beer (ビール).

I have continued to study Japanese since I moved here. Many cities offer language classes to foreign residents, but my company kindly recommended an online language class (1 on 1, about 1800 JPY per lesson - <https://www.nihongo-lesson.jp/>). Other online services are of course available. I currently have JLPT N3, which is more than sufficient to get by with daily conversation.

Regarding mobile network and internet:

(NTT) docomo is everywhere you go. au and Softbank are also good options. I suspect they all have many non-Japanese customers, so they would probably be good to go with. Pocket wifi is somewhat common, but I don't use it myself.

Regarding mobile banking (and general money questions)

There are still quite a few places that will only take cash, especially when you go further away from Tokyo, Yokohama and the other cities. At the same time, I've also found a few places in Tokyo that do not accept cash at all - usually the newer, pop-up stores. As such, it's definitely necessary to make sure you have access to both card and cash at any one time. Contactless card usage is not as popular as in the UK - even if your card has a contactless function, sometimes the staff will request you to enter the card into the terminal for various reasons.

Tip 2: One thing that is VERY popular here are these QR code mobile payment apps such as PayPay - even the local 'cash only' Japanese-Italian restaurant will also accept PayPay. It's certainly worth looking into using them (PayPay, auPay, d-Pay etc.) if possible. I think they only require a smartphone to use, but cannot guarantee non-Japanese bank accounts can be used with them.

Regarding business cards:

Absolutely they are still used - if the scholars go to conferences, they can expect to be giving out business cards to a lot of people. It is good to make sure they have space to 'receive' a lot of cards too. I wouldn't cram too many of their own into their card case to avoid crushing the cards they kindly received from their conversation partners.

Regarding the JR Rail Pass and transportation:

I think the scholars would be eligible to get these, as they would not be classed as 'residents' of Japan in the same way I am (they need to be 'Temporary visitors' to use these things).

Please note the price of the rail pass went up quite dramatically recently, to the point it's now harder to get value for money.

For example, someone would need to travel from Tokyo->Kyoto->Hiroshima->Kyoto->Tokyo with the 7 day pass to get close to the cost of the pass. Of course, other benefits of the pass include usage on normal JR lines, the Monorail to Haneda, Miyajima Ferry etc. It also saves time purchasing tickets (you can purchase tickets online).

Railcards (continued)

Tip 3: This website is very useful for working out whether the rail pass is value for money: <https://www.japan-guide.com/railpass/>

Tip 4: There are regional rail passes that may be far better value for money, especially if one of the scholars wants to explore specific regions like Kansai or Tohoku.
<https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2357.html>

Tip 5: Suica (IC) cards (Japanese version of the Oyster card) became harder to acquire recently due to a shortage of chips. I would strongly recommend the scholars get themselves a "welcome Suica" at the airport when they arrive. There is also an 'app' that one can use for these things nowadays. If flying into Kansai, ICOCA do a similar card.

Tip 6: For researchers of larger size (think: Uniqlo XL or larger), I would recommend checking out 'Sakazen' for any last-minute clothing they may want to purchase (for example, new shirts or clothing that is suited for the Japanese climate in case they need to wear something for a conference or meeting) - they cater to larger folks include formal wear and have quite a few stores nationwide.

Tip 7: If someone intends to bring medication into Japan for personal use, please make sure they avoid OTC medicines such as Sudafed and Benadryl, both of which contain banned substances.

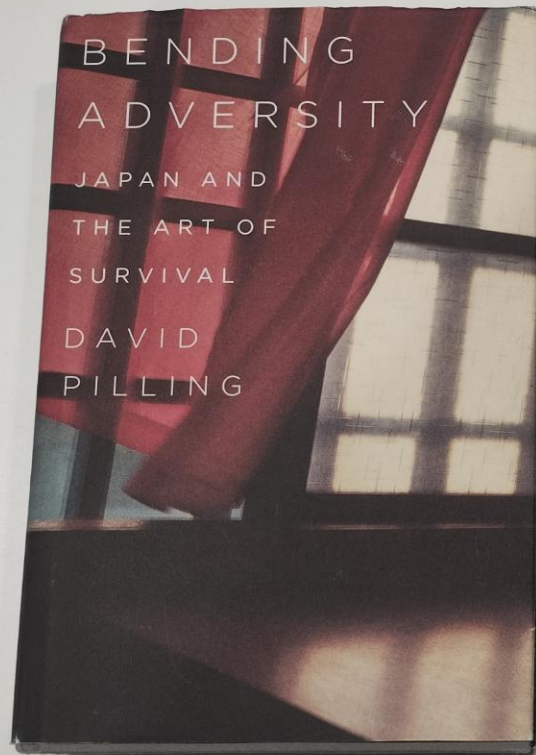
Tip 8: If the researchers want to hit the ground running, it would be very kind of them to bring some small snacks (omiyage) to share with their colleagues when moving to their new Japanese institution. This is not expected though, so no problem if it's not possible or is something from Heathrow duty-free.

Tip 9: Never underestimate the importance of *nemawashi* - in effect, privately seeking advice or support for an idea prior to a group meeting. This is a practice that goes on without people really noticing it, but it's quite important to do in a research based-setting, especially as an early career researcher.

Many of the scholars' new colleagues may not be as receptive to new ideas being shared without notice in a group meeting setting, which can lead to misunderstandings on both sides.

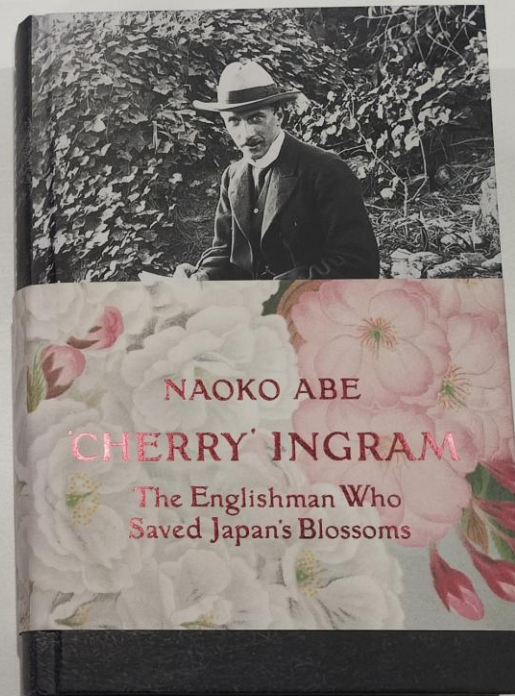
If the scholars consider it as 'troubleshooting' their idea or proposal before a meeting, they may be able to shore up their proposal and get agreement much faster than would be done otherwise. At the same time, their colleagues will feel their support and experience is valued by their international guests.

By way of an example, I regularly run some of my more 'novel' designs past most of my colleagues before presenting them in a meeting. Even if some of them disagree with the hypothesis, as long as I acknowledge that some colleagues kindly pointed out my designed compounds may have some unintended side-effect, most members are satisfied that we are on the same page.



DAVID PILLING 2014

FT Tokyo Bureau chief
2002-2008



NAOKO ABE 2019

THANK-YOU FOR LISTENING

Let me die
Underneath the blossoms
In the Spring
Around the day
Of the full moon

Saigyō 1118-1190

