

I'm usually a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Epidemiology & Health Care at University College London. In March 2023, I took a break from this role to visit the Department of Social Science at the National Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology (NCGG) in Obu, just outside Nagoya in Japan. During my 2-month Short-Term JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship, I visited Prof Tami Saito's team, collaborating closely with her and other colleagues including Dr Taiji Noguchi. We developed a program of work that compares the predictors and benefits for wellbeing of arts engagement in the UK, US, and Japan. This collaboration started when one of my colleagues, Dr Karen Mak, reached out to Taiji as they had published similar research using data from the UK (Karen) and Japan (Taiji).

I hugely benefitted from this fellowship. Having never visited Japan before, the opportunity to live there for an extended period was exciting. My lack of Japanese made it a challenging experience, particularly as the NCGG is in a rural area which does not get many Western visitors. But everyone was hugely welcoming and friendly, which helped me overcome the language barrier. This fellowship was also hugely productive in terms of our research. We have two manuscripts in preparation, which we're aiming to publish in high-impact international journals. I gave presentations to the NCGG and was able to learn about the cultural context in Japan, such as by visiting community salons and observing older people participating in arts interventions (as pictured). I look forward to continuing our collaboration and welcoming Dr Taiji Noguchi to the UK on a return research visit.



Picture 1: Visit to a community salon



Picture 2: Presenting to NCGG researchers