

*Voice of the International Students*

# VIS

医学研究院  
国際連携部門だより

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## What is VIS ?

The International Relations Division of the Faculty of Medicine issues VIS to send out the live messages from International Students of Graduate School of Medicine, Graduate School of Biomedical Science and School of Medicine, and to promote the exchange of intercultural information. We hope VIS helps to cultivate intercultural communications and boost international exchanges.

VISの発行の目的は、医学院・医理工学院・医学部医学科の留学生の生の声を発信することと、異文化間の情報交換を促進することです。VISが異文化間のコミュニケーションを養い、国際交流を実行していくうえで役立つことを望みます。

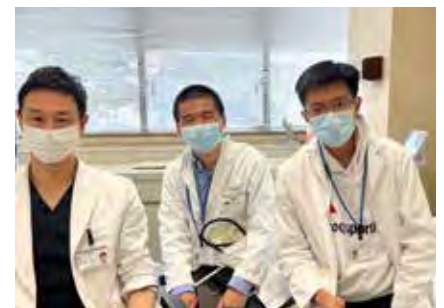
## WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

### The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

**T**he overall experience at Hokkaido University is extremely good. Clinically, I was given a lot of chances to observe various procedures, such as cardiac catheterization. Moreover, I also had a chance to perform transthoracic echocardiography on real patients. Furthermore, every doctor in Hokkaido University is so nice and willing to teach and help me during my stay in Hokkaido. Meanwhile, in the aspect of extracurricular activities, I also tried a lot of things like skiing during my stay. This makes my 1-month stay even more enjoyable.

I also learned a lot in Hokkaido University during this month. For example, I learned a lot of knowledge and skills in cardiology in the activities mentioned above. Besides clinical knowledge and skills, I have also learnt a lot about interpersonal communication. As a person who could not speak Japanese, it was not easy to communicate with others in Hokkaido. However, after staying here for 1 month, I learned about how I can communicate with Japanese more effectively, for example by key words in English or body language.

In conclusion, the stay is enjoyable. Therefore, I suggest that Hokkaido University should continue to have such a programme for other students in the future.



**Chui Wing Lun (middle) & Chan Leong Yiu (right)**

Department of Cardiovascular Medicine  
Period: April 8 – May 2, 2024



**Chui Wing Lun**

Department of Cardiovascular Medicine  
Period: April 8 – May 2, 2024

**D**uring these four weeks, I was attached to the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, and the attachment proved very enlightening both professionally and personally. I had the opportunity to explore different facets of cardiology, ranging from electrophysiology, catheterization, echocardiogram, and a myriad of other skills and knowledge. For instance, I gained valuable insights about ablations for atrial fibrillation and the interpretation of transthoracic and transesophageal echocardiograms. We also shadowed cardiologists in their departmental conferences, ward duties, and outpatient clinics, and developed a comprehensive understanding of the duties and responsibilities of cardiologists. Despite the language barrier, all the doctors we encountered were extremely kind and friendly, explaining difficult medical concepts in English, and we learned a great deal from them. During my free time, I could also explore Sapporo and surrounding areas and enjoy sightseeing and immersing myself in local culture. Overall, this is a wonderful elective that I will cherish forever.

## WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

### From Medical University of Vienna, Austria



#### Michael Springer

Department of Neurosurgery  
Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
Period: April 22 – June 28, 2024

The first steps I took in Japan were under cherry trees in full bloom on my way to the universities accommodation followed up by the stroll through the expansive park of Hokkaido University towards the University Hospital the next day. After a few days I started to get used to the every days ins and outs of the department and theater and even though a language barrier was ever present to some extent I was very thankful to the many doctors and students who made the effort to talk or explain to me in English. I enjoyed observing and learning from the extensive operations at the Department of Neurosurgery and practicing the many different suturing techniques at the Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. I was happy to have gotten to know so many of the staff and students inside and outside of the hospital, having dinner, going on hikes or simply talking about our professional and every day lives in Japan and Austria.

### From National University of Singapore, Singapore

During my 4 weeks in Hokkaido University Hospital, I was shown so much hospitality from not just the doctors but also the students in the hospital! Despite the significant language barrier, the doctors in both departments went the extra mile to translate everything for me during rounds. During my postings, my doctors even went through the steps of each surgery with me a day before the actual surgery and even took the time to conduct tutorials for me using simulation models!

Besides that, the local medical students were extremely welcoming, inviting me to lunch and even to their school festival on my last day! Furthermore, we even had the privilege to go on a short sightseeing trip around Sapporo with our doctors after work. I am truly grateful to have made such valuable and beautiful memories with my new Japanese friends and we have maintained in contact till now.

Overall, my experience at Hokkaido University was an absolutely unforgettable one and I would never trade it with anything in the world! Hope to see everyone again in the future!



#### Pang Xin Ler

Department of Gastroenterological Surgery II  
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
Period: May 13 – June 7, 2024

# WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

## From National University of Singapore, Singapore



### Sia Hon Jiun, Aaron

Department of Neurology  
Department of Gastroenterological Surgery II  
Period: May 13 – June 7, 2024

**M**y elective at Hokkaido University was an eye-opening experience. Despite the short time I was there, it was a genuine privilege to observe and participate briefly in the hospital. Academically, it was incredible to witness their meticulous approach to gastroenterological surgery and the comprehensiveness of their approach to neurological diagnosis.

Beyond academics, I was welcomed with open arms by staffs and students alike, despite the obvious language barrier. It is a rare opportunity to be able to connect and share experiences with an individual of a different culture and language. My elective at Hokkaido University provided exactly that. In the hospital, the doctors demonstrated an incredible hospitality, going beyond their duty to translate and include us in many learning opportunities! Outside the hospital, I will always remember the shared laughter and the moments spent at the student festival with the Japanese students and now, friends!

Even as I continue my journey in Singapore, the warmth and hospitality I experienced at Hokkaido University has left an indelible mark on me. I will carry these invaluable perspectives into my practice as a future physician, in my professional, collegial and personal relationships. Thank you for being a part of my journey!

## From University Malaya, Malaysia

**A**s I prepared for this exchange program, I was filled with both excitement and nervous anticipation. The prospect of studying abroad as a visiting medical student was thrilling, but the idea of navigating a foreign environment, grappling with a language barrier, and representing my university weighed heavily on my mind. However, to my surprise, that fear dissipated as soon as I arrived at Hokkaido University. The two weeks I spent here were nothing short of life changing. I chose to attach to Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery during the exchange, and it turned out to be the perfect decision. I was met with an incredibly welcoming team of surgeons and staff who went out of their way to make me feel included. My supervisor, Dr. Maeda, took me to his outpatient clinic and operations, meticulously explaining each procedure and case. I encountered numerous skin malignancy cases that I would rarely see in my home country. The highlight of my time was the numerous opportunities I had to scrub in on surgeries and learn the fine suturing techniques that plastic surgeons are renowned for. Beyond the medical learning, I was also immersed in Japanese culture, even having the chance to learn matcha-making from the department secretaries. The residents also played a significant role in my experience, with Dr. Shu, a first-year resident, being particularly supportive. She patiently explained complex medical details, ensuring I fully grasped the concepts. This experience solidified my interest in plastic surgery, and as I conclude my time at Hokkaido University, I am more determined than ever to pursue this specialty, inspired by the exemplary doctors I had the privilege of learning from.

A picture of me (right) and my supervisor, Dr Taku Maeda (left)



### Dhania Camelia Ngu Ee-Fen

Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
Period: July 22 – August 2, 2024

## WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

### From University Malaya, Malaysia

On my first day at Hokkaido University's Department of Gastroenterological Surgery I, I was warmly welcomed by my supervisor, Watanabe Masaaki-sensei. After our initial meeting, he asked me to introduce myself during the morning conference, which was attended by the entire department. Although I introduced myself in English, I had also practiced a brief introduction in Japanese, and I concluded with "yoroshiku onegaishimasu." The gesture was well-received, and it set the tone for the hospitality that followed throughout my time there.

Shortly after, I was introduced to Professor Taketomi Akinobu, the head of the department. He was incredibly kind and approachable, making me feel welcome from the outset. Watanabe-sensei also assigned me a buddy, Morimatsu Haruna-sensei, who is the only female surgeon in the department and a resident. Having her as a mentor and guide was invaluable. She helped me navigate the nuances of the department and ensured I was comfortable in every aspect of my elective.

I was especially impressed by how all of the surgeons in the Department of Gastroenterological Surgery I were not only skilled professionals but also genuinely kind and supportive. They all made me feel comfortable, constantly checking in to ensure that I understood what was happening during the surgeries and discussions. Their kindness and willingness to help made a significant impact on me.

The department is divided into several specialized teams, including the pediatric surgery team, colorectal surgery team, liver and transplant surgery team, and others. Each team contributed to my growth during this elective, and I will always remember them for their dedication and care. The experience I gained from these diverse areas of surgery has been invaluable, and I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from them.

The hospitality extended by Hokkaido University's staff, as well as the warmth of the local people, truly made my experience memorable. I was fortunate to scrub in on several surgeries and assist with various tasks. The attending surgeons were always considerate of my understanding and took the time to translate everything for me, ensuring that I could fully engage with the procedures and discussions. Their dedication to making sure I gained as much as possible from the elective was remarkable.



**Sufiyah Aqilah Binti Shamsud-din**

Department of Gastroenterological Surgery I  
Period: July 22 – August 2, 2024

Beyond the clinical exposure, I received a lot of support from other members of the university. Murakami-sensei and Kitagawa Junko-san from the International Relations Office had been instrumental in guiding me through the application process months before I arrived in Sapporo. Their continued assistance during my stay only reaffirmed the university's commitment to its international students.

This elective has given me invaluable experience, not just in the field of gastroenterological surgery, but in how a well-coordinated, supportive, and inclusive medical environment functions. I am immensely grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside such dedicated professionals. Thanks to the entire team under Gastroenterological Surgery I, I have gained experiences and memories that will stay with me throughout my medical career. I will always remember this period of my life as I continue my journey to becoming a successful doctor.



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