Voice of the International Students

VIS

医学研究院
国際連携部門だより

October 2026
(Vol.45)

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, GraduateSchool 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

From National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

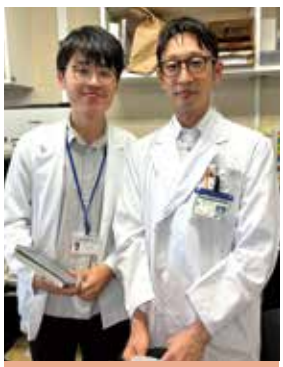
During my four-week clerkship, I spent two weeks each in Rehabilitation Medicine and Ophthalmology. Beyond acquiring clinical knowledge through outpatient clinics and surgeries, I was most impressed by the profound structural differences between the Japanese and Taiwanese healthcare systems.

In Japan, strict referral requirements—and fully reservation-based clinics in departments like Rehabilitation—significantly reduce patient volume. This policy preserves specialized medical resources for critical and rare cases while allowing physicians sufficient time for thorough, high-quality consultations, which is virtually unimaginable in Taiwan's high-pressure environment. Consequently, this streamlined system greatly enhances clinical education; with reduced daily workloads, instructors have more time to teach and explain cases, enabling them to effectively balance research, teaching, and patient care.

Additionally, as a Taiwanese medical student, I was envious to learn that Japanese students face no quota restrictions when selecting their specialties, though the long-term impact of such a system on physician training warrants further evaluation.

My sincere thanks go to Hokkaido University and Hokkaido University Hospital for hosting this incredibly rewarding and eye-opening clerkship.

Hsu, Cheng-Pin
Department of Rehabilitation Medicine
Department of Ophthalmology
Period: June 8 – July 3, 2026



Hsieh, Yuan-Ren
Department of Orthopedic Surgery
Period: June 15 - July 10, 2026

From Taipei Medical University, Taiwan

The overall experience at Hokkaido University has been wonderful (本当素晴らしいです)!!! Even before my arrival, the International Relations Division provided comprehensive information regarding accommodation, required documents, and all necessary preparations for the overseas internship. This made me feel that they were extremely attentive and considerate.

I was very fortunate to be assigned to the Department of Orthopedic Surgery, where both the residents and attendings physicians were kind and passionate in their teaching. Although I was not really good at Japanese, they consistently tried their best to translate the discussions during morning meetings, ward rounds, outpatient clinics, and even surgical procedures. Their support ensured that I could actively participate and fully understand the clinical reasoning and management of each case.

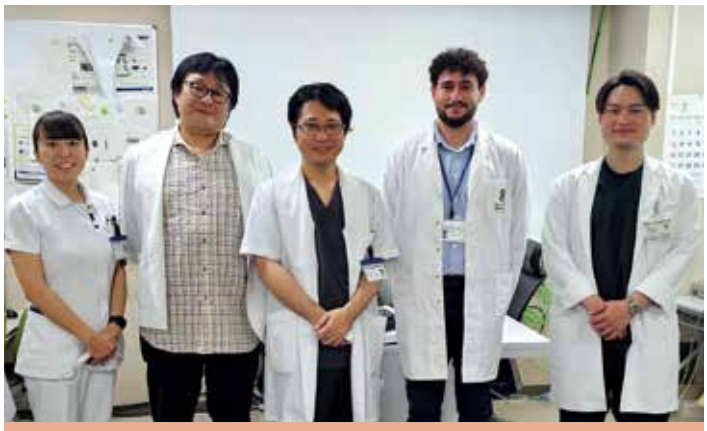
One of the most significant differences I observed between the medical systems in Japan and Taiwan is the implementation of a well-structured tiered medical system. In Japan, patients seen at the university hospital are typically more severely ill or have multiple comorbidities, while the overall patient volume is carefully controlled. This allowed physicians to dedicate more time to each patient and provide thorough evaluations, comprehensive treatment, and extended inpatient observation when necessary.

I was deeply impressed by the attentive and meticulous care that physicians here provide to their patients. Their professionalism and dedication have inspired me, and I hope to become a physician who embodies the same level of commitment and compassion in the future.

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From The University of Queensland, Australia

My time at Hokkaido University was absolutely amazing! Coming all the way from Australia, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect, but the experience completely blew me away. Sapporo is such a beautiful city, and I loved every minute of exploring it.



Ali Damen
Department of Neurosurgery
Department of Cardiovascular Surgery
Period: May 18 – July 10, 2026

One of the most interesting parts of this exchange was seeing the differences between hospitals in Australia and Japan. The hospital culture, the way the surgical teams work together, and even daily life in the city were so unique compared to back home. Everyone was incredibly welcoming, which made adjusting to the new environment so much easier.

During my placement, getting to spend time in both the Neurosurgery and Cardiovascular Surgery departments was a massive highlight. The surgeries I got to observe were fascinating, and the doctors were so skilled and patient in teaching me. It was a really eye-opening experience that I'll never forget.

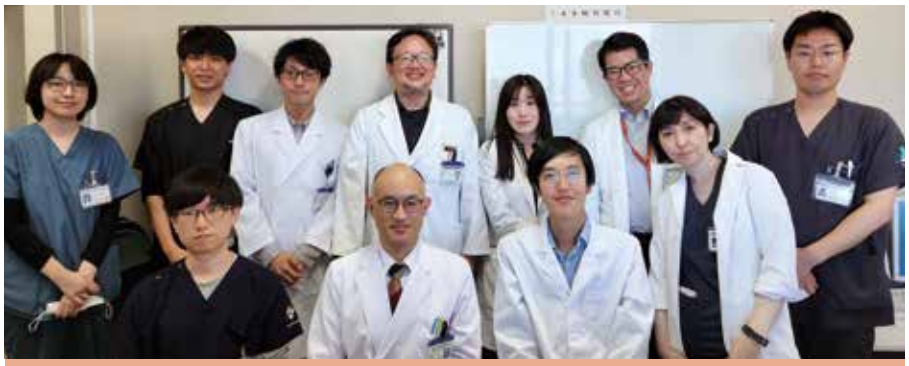
Outside the hospital, I couldn't get over how beautiful Japan is. From the amazing food to the stunning scenery around Hokkaido, everything was just perfect. I'm so grateful for this opportunity—it was an unforgettable trip, both as a medical student and as a traveller!

My eight-week elective placement at Hokkaido University Hospital was one of the most rewarding experiences of my medical training. During my time in Sapporo, I had the opportunity to explore a diverse range of specialties while developing a deeper understanding of both the Japanese healthcare system and clinical practice. Arriving in Japan was initially daunting, as I spoke very little Japanese and was adapting to an entirely new environment. However, the support I received from university faculty, hospital staff, local students, and fellow international students quickly made me feel welcome and included.

Throughout my rotations, I was encouraged to step outside my comfort zone by presenting clinical cases and engaging with unfamiliar topics, including insulin autoimmune syndrome and infantile epileptic spasms syndrome. These experiences significantly strengthened my confidence, adaptability, and clinical reasoning skills.

I was particularly impressed by the broad clinical responsibilities undertaken by Japanese physicians and their strong commitment to patient-centred communication and care. I was also fascinated by the innovative approaches developed to address Japan's unique healthcare challenges, particularly those associated with an ageing population.

Beyond medicine, I developed a deeper appreciation for Japanese culture, teamwork, and professionalism. The lifelong friendships I formed with local and international students were equally valuable and will remain a lasting highlight of my time at Hokkaido University. I am sincerely grateful for this opportunity and would highly recommend the program to future students seeking both clinical and personal growth.



Gyeom (Harry) Ko
Department of Rheumatology, Endocrinology and Nephrology
Department of Pediatrics
Period: May 18 - July 10, 2026

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From University of Cambridge, UK

My time in Hokkaido was certainly some of my favourite time spent in Japan for my elective. I was interested to see how the paediatric department was split by speciality, and across all those I engaged with, I found helpful and friendly doctors, with a fantastic bedside manner, who were also very keen to teach. Staff were encouraging as I attempted to further my Japanese learning, while also pushing themselves to teach more difficult concepts using English vocabulary. I felt consistently supported and engaged as a result. I got the opportunity to attend ward rounds, see ward work, case presentations, and help with lab work. I also took a couple of trips to IR to see PICC lines placed, and helped and observed initial neonatal resus in C-sections, including attending my first birth of twins!

Thank you to all those who made this experience possible. The hospital is well run, and the university itself is beautiful. I was given plenty of recommendations for exploring Sapporo after hospital hours, and staff were always keen to help me make the most of my time in Hokkaido. I'm sure I will return in future!

Mia Urwin
Department of Pediatrics
Period: July 27 - August 7, 2026

Alexander Freund
Department of Cardiovascular Surgery
Department of Thoracic Surgery
Period: July 13 – September 4, 2026

From Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany

My eight weeks at Hokkaido University Hospital were one of the most memorable experiences of my medical studies. I spent the first four weeks in Cardiovascular Surgery and the second half in Thoracic Surgery, which gave me the opportunity to experience two different surgical specialties and to compare clinical practice in Japan with what I know from Germany.

During my placement, I observed a wide range of complex operations, including pulmonary embolectomy, resection of an atrial myxoma, and a heart transplantation. In Thoracic Surgery, I was also able to experience minimally invasive and robot-assisted procedures. I was especially impressed by the calm and structured teamwork in the operating room and by how openly the doctors explained procedures and made me feel part of the team.

Outside the hospital, living in Sapporo and exploring Hokkaido made the experience even more special. I met many kind people and gained valuable insight into Japanese culture and everyday life. I am very grateful to both departments and to the International Relations Division for their warm welcome and support throughout my stay.

From Humanitas University, Italy

My one-month clerkship in the Department of Cardiovascular Surgery at Hokkaido University Hospital has been one of the most rewarding parts of my medical education so far. The days followed a steady, immersive rhythm. Each morning began with the departmental conference, where the surgical team meticulously reviewed every patient and set out the precise plan for the day. Ward rounds came next, followed by extensive time in the operating theatre. That seamless continuity gave me a far more complete picture of comprehensive cardiac surgical care than any textbook could ever provide.

What impressed me most was the extraordinary variety of cases. I observed many rare conditions I rarely encounter at my home university, including complex congenital heart defects, and I was incredibly fortunate to witness a full heart transplantation. Watching the team navigate demanding operations with remarkable calmness and precision was genuinely inspiring, significantly deepening my understanding of both surgical anatomy and perioperative management.

Despite some language barriers, the English-speaking doctors patiently explained cases and procedures, making me feel truly included. Outside the hospital, I explored Sapporo's culture deeply. Honestly, after eating so much ramen, I feel the university owes me a ramen certificate alongside my completion letter :)

Chan, Shing Ho Vincent
Department of Cardiovascular Surgery
Period: August 3 – August 28, 2026

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From University of Côte d'Azur, France

My placement at Hokkaido University was a truly enriching experience, both professionally and personally. From the very beginning, I was struck by the atmosphere of excellence, curiosity, and humility.. I had the opportunity to rotate through the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine and the Department of Diagnostic Imaging, where I was particularly impressed by the quality of teaching and the dedication of the medical teams. They were consistently kind, approachable, and attentive. Everyone went out of their way to make me feel welcome and to ensure that I could fully benefit from the experience.

I also had the pleasure of meeting many remarkably talented and inspiring people. Our conversations went far beyond medicine: I received numerous recommendations about places to visit in Hokkaido, as well as local food to try, especially Sapporo's famous soup curry. These exchanges made me feel truly welcomed and gave me a deeper appreciation of Japanese culture.

I sincerely hope that, one day, I can become a doctor as inspiring as those I had the privilege of meeting here. Hokkaido is a place I will certainly return to, not only for medicine, but also for the people and memories I will carry with me.

本当にありがとうございました！

Mehmed Kumbarić
Department of Cardiovascular Medicine
Department of Diagnostic Imaging
Period: July 21 – August 28, 2026

Coming Soon!

International Hour

The 73rd International Hour – Austria

We are pleased to announce that we will hold the next International Hour in November 2026.

We, the International Relations Division, are hosting the event to welcome exchange students as speakers and share students' knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of their individual countries.

On Friday, November 6, we welcome students from Austria, Ms. Helene Kruttner and Mr. Raphael Schürger from Medical University of Vienna, as presenters of the 73rd International Hour.

Those who just missed the last meeting can always catch up with us. We look forward to having you!

<Event Information>

- Date/Time: Friday, November 6, 2026 @ 12:00- 12:45
  Come and go freely as your class allows.
- Venue: Medium Conference Room, 1F Administration Building, Graduate School of Medicine
  Admission is Free. Snacks and Beverages will be served.

＊ Registration preferred. Still, we welcome walk-ins!

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Issued by the International Relations Division, Faculty of Medicine, Hokkaido University
Correspondence to : **relation@med.hokudai.ac.jp**
Website URL : **https://edu.med.hokudai.ac.jp/international-relations/**