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, 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 Taipei Medical University, Taiwan

I learned a great deal from my one-month clinical rotation in the Department of Cardiology at Hokkaido University Hospital. In Taiwan, we only have two weeks of rotation in cardiology, and at that time, I spent most of my time learning in the wards. During my rotation in Japan, however, I had many more opportunities to observe procedures in the catheterization room and echocardiography room. I was also able to see many procedures that I had never encountered before, such as cardiac muscle biopsy (CMB) and right heart catheterization (RHC). I found these experiences extremely valuable.

Although I do not speak Japanese, Dr. Kamiya and all the other faculty members and senior residents were very kind and enthusiastic about explaining the procedures in English, including what was being done and how to interpret the images. I am truly grateful for everyone's guidance and patience throughout my rotation. I had a wonderful and rewarding month at Hokkaido University Hospital. This experience not only broadened my clinical knowledge and perspective but also deepened my interest in cardiology.



Lin, Yu-Hsuan
Department of Cardiovascular Medicine
Period: August 17 – September 11, 2026

From National Taiwan University, Taiwan



Chen, Wei Yen
Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Period: October 13 – November 6, 2026

During my four-week elective in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Hokkaido University, I had the opportunity to observe a wide variety of surgical procedures, including craniofacial fracture repair, cleft lip and palate surgery, skin cancer excision and reconstruction, breast surgery, and congenital hand deformity correction. These experiences showed me that plastic surgery extends far beyond aesthetic procedures. It plays an essential role in restoring function, reconstructing damaged tissues, and improving patients' quality of life.

I was particularly impressed by the precision required in reconstructive surgery and the careful planning involved in selecting appropriate techniques for different patients. Observing the surgical team also helped me appreciate the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration and individualized patient care.

Beyond the operating room, this elective gave me valuable insight into the Japanese clinical environment and allowed me to learn from physicians with different perspectives and approaches. I am grateful for the opportunity to study at Hokkaido University and for the kindness and guidance of the faculty and medical staff. This experience has broadened my understanding of plastic surgery and strengthened my motivation to continue developing my clinical knowledge and surgical skills.

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From University Malaya, Malaysia

I don't quite know where to start, but when I think about Hokkaido University, all I have are fond memories. Even after returning home, I still find myself looking back and thinking, "Wow, I really miss this place."

One of my favourite parts was simply walking to the hospital every morning. The cool breeze and beautiful scenery were honestly chef's kiss, the cherry on top that made my mornings. Getting immersed in the surroundings sometimes felt like I was transcending into another dimension!



Teoh Qian
Department of Orthopedic Surgery
Period: July 27 – September 4, 2026

The doctors, or "sensei" as they are called in Japan, were incredibly welcoming and patient. Although not everyone was fluent in English, they always made the effort to explain, teach, and even use Google Translate when necessary. Pro tip: if you want to get the most out of the experience, be proactive and ask questions. Otherwise, as an international student with limited Japanese, you might miss out on so much of their knowledge and experience.

I also picked up many little lessons about Japanese culture. One sensei imparted a general Japanese philosophy of being mindful not to inconvenience others and trying to handle what you can on your own. It made me appreciate their thoughtfulness and independence. Another little etiquette tip I learnt was to keep your hands out of your pockets when speaking to someone.

If I could change one thing, I would have learnt more Japanese beforehand. That's probably my biggest regret, but also my best excuse to come back someday.

During my time at Hokkaido University, I had the privilege of undertaking clinical electives in two departments: Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery and Cardiovascular Medicine. It was an incredibly enriching experience, both clinically and culturally, and allowed me to gain valuable insight into a healthcare system different from my home country.

Clinically, I was exposed to a wide range of specialised procedures. In Otolaryngology, I observed complex head and neck surgeries, including tumour resection and total laryngectomy. In Cardiovascular Medicine, I gained exposure to cardiac catheterisation, electrophysiology, TAVR, and MitraClip procedures. These experiences broadened my clinical knowledge and allowed me to appreciate advanced medical practices that are less accessible to students in my home institution.

The teaching at Hokkaido University was exceptional. The doctors were knowledgeable, approachable, and welcoming, and they actively encouraged students to participate in clinical discussions. Their willingness to share their expertise made the learning experience particularly meaningful.

Beyond the hospital, I enjoyed exploring Hokkaido during summer and experiencing its beautiful scenery, culture, and food. Overall, this elective contributed greatly to my clinical and personal growth. I am grateful for the memories and hope to return to Hokkaido University in the future. I would highly recommend this programme to future students seeking an enriching international experience.



Ian Glenn L R M Florence
Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
Department of Cardiovascular Medicine
Period: July 27 - September 4, 2026

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From University of Hamburg, Germany

My internship in general surgery in Sapporo was an unforgettable experience that gave me valuable insights into both surgical medicine and Japanese culture. During my time at the hospital, I had the opportunity to spend time with different surgical teams, including pediatric, liver, and colorectal surgery. Most of my days were spent in the operating room, where I could observe a wide variety of procedures and learn more about different surgical techniques and approaches.

One of the most fascinating experiences was witnessing a living-donor liver transplantation. Seeing such a complex procedure and observing the close cooperation between the different members of the surgical team was truly impressive. It gave me a deeper appreciation for the precision, responsibility, and teamwork required in transplant surgery.

I also joined the doctors during their morning ward rounds and occasionally attended outpatient consultations, which allowed me to experience different aspects of everyday clinical work.

Beyond medicine, getting to know the team personally was especially meaningful to me. Their kindness, openness, and hospitality allowed me to experience Japanese culture in a very personal way. This combination of medical learning and cultural exchange made my internship a truly enriching and memorable experience.



Tessa Kastner

Department of Gastroenterological Surgery I
Period: August 17 - September 16, 2026

Looking back on my time in the Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Hokkaido University Hospital, I can confidently say that it was a phenomenal and unforgettable experience. I gained valuable insights into the Japanese healthcare system through clinical conferences, discussions of rare and complex cases, outpatient consultations and a wide range of surgical procedures. I was also fortunate to participate in surgery and improve my practical skills through different suturing techniques and microsurgical training.



David Pham

Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Period: August 17 – September 16, 2026

A special thanks goes to Professor Taku Maeda, whose enthusiasm, patience and willingness to explain procedures and clinical decisions made the rotation particularly valuable. Learning directly from the doctors and being able to ask questions throughout the day allowed me to gain not only practical skills, but also a deeper understanding of surgical thinking.

Beyond medicine, this experience gave me the opportunity to discover Japanese culture and explore Sapporo and Hokkaido. The combination of professional learning and cultural experiences has broadened both my perspective on medicine and my personal outlook.

I am very grateful for this opportunity and for the partnership between the University of Hamburg and Hokkaido University. I hope many more students will have the chance to experience this exchange.

From University of Auckland, New Zealand

My clinical elective across both gastroenterological surgery departments at the Hokkaido University Hospital has been a great pleasure and a valuable experience I would recommend to anyone. I was given many opportunities to observe interesting and complex surgeries, which the surgeons kindly translated and explained to me in a way that was easy to understand for my level of expertise. You can tell both departments are hardworking and honest practices that hope to make people interested in their field, as they actively engage students in understanding the theory and purpose of their procedures and welcome them into the team, from narrating anatomy during robotic operations to giving up their free time to teach me on the laparoscopy practice kit. Highlights included a Partington procedure, a robotic oesophagectomy performed alongside the ENT surgeons, and the case conferences, which showed me how much surgery relies on careful planning and teamwork. I also greatly improved my Japanese for medical conversations through wonderful interactions with the team inside and outside the hospital. I am truly grateful to Dr Wada, Dr Watanabe and both departments for their warm welcome and generous teaching.



Nicolas Joe Smith

Department of Gastroenterological Surgery II
Department of Gastroenterological Surgery I
Period: August 31 - October 23, 2026

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

My experience at Hokkaido University was truly amazing. Being attached to the radiology and dermatology departments, I was welcomed by friendly doctors who were passionate about their job, while teaching and engaging with me during their daily duties.

During the radiology department, the doctors handpicked useful cases that are useful for medical students. This enabled me to make the most of my time while I was here. The doctors also explained cases in detail, clarifying any doubts I had while highlighting pertinent points of every case.

My workday in dermatology was different, but equally fruitful. I mainly sat in clinics and observed the cases that walked through the door, with doctors going the extra mile by explaining each and every case to me. They also gave me the opportunity to observe surgeries, which was memorable and eye-opening.

Hokkaido as a whole was also very interesting, with nice places around and tons of great food. During the weekends and public holidays, I had fun exploring the nearby regions of Asahikawa and Hakodate thanks to the recommendation of my doctors. Overall, I've thoroughly enjoyed myself over the six weeks!



Rytus Lim
Department of Diagnostic Imaging
Department of Dermatology
Period: August 24 – October 2, 2026



Phang, Poh Hui
Department of Rheumatology, Nephrology and Endocrinology
Period: September 24 – October 2, 2026

My two weeks placement in the Department of Rheumatology in Hokkaido University Hospital was nothing short of a memorable and rewarding experience. From the first day I joined the team, all the doctors were friendly and welcoming. Despite the language barrier, they always took the time and effort to translate during ward rounds and clinics for me and always included me in case discussions which made me feel that I was part of the team.

Clinically, I was able to observe and learn about a wide range of rheumatological conditions, including several that are less common in my home country. This broadened my understanding of how these diseases present, how they are investigated and how treatment decisions are made. Observing the doctors' interactions with the patients, I could see and learn from how they embody the spirit of patient-centered care as well.

Beyond the hospital, Hokkaido's sights and scenery and food were incredible. Exploring the region was enjoyable and gave me a deeper appreciation of the Japanese culture as well.

Overall, I am very grateful for the opportunity to learn at Hokkaido University Hospital, and for the kindness and guidance I received from everyone in the department.

International Hour

The 73rd International Hour – Austria

We are delighted to report that we have held the International Hour!

On 6 November 2026, Ms. Helene Kruttner and Mr. Raphael Schürger presented on topics related to their home country for the 73rd International Hour.

This time, an exchange student from National Taiwan University joined this meeting. He is also in clinical year and started to take clinical electives at Hokkaido University School of Medicine in October.

Although our meetings are limited to lunch hour, it was an enriching time listening to the differences between the two countries and learning about their daily lives and culture, such as their traditional Christmas.

We hope these meetings inspire you to engage more confidently in international opportunities.

Don't miss our next meeting in June 2027!





Krampus: "悪い子はいねぇがー" — Namahage in Austria?!

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