



Newsletter

No. 35 September 30 2019

Tokyo Medical and Dental University
Latin American Collaborative Research Center (LACRC)

Reflecting on my Student Days

TMDU offers its students a number of opportunities to study abroad, including Project Semester, a program for fourth-year medical students aimed at cultivating basic medical practice skills overseas, and Overseas Clinical Experience for sixth-year students. As you will have seen from the pages of this newsletter, two TMDU students are currently on the Project Semester Program at the University of Chile.

Since I am currently on assignment in Chile as a member of the LACRC team, I have opportunities to meet with the students from TMDU, and when I ask them their thoughts on clinical medicine and basic research and their aspirations for the future, I am always surprised by their level of self-awareness. Perhaps I wasn't terribly self-aware myself, but when I was their age I think I only had vague ideas about the future. In my memory, the classes and practical training needed simply to move up to the next grade took up all of my time.

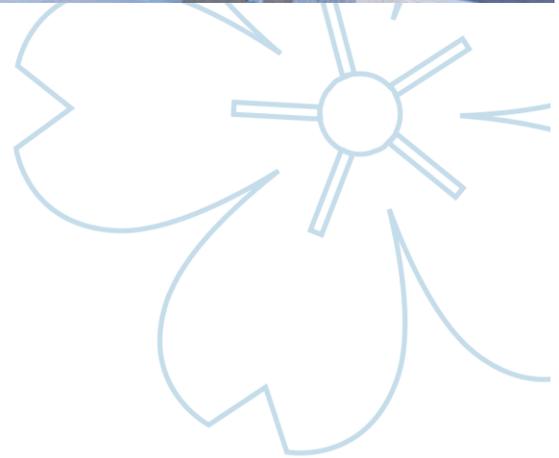
I graduated from TMDU in 2003, but these overseas study programs weren't available when I was a student. Also, since the year I graduated was the year before the super rotation program started (now a two-year program of introductory clinical practice), there was no system for matching clinical practice. At that time, most of the senior students and classmates I knew were assigned to one of the medical offices at TMDU.

I realize that not every student will be interested in them, but overseas study programs designed to enhance student motivation and systems for matching clinical practice designed to facilitate entry into a student's desired practice are there for the taking. Students' thoughts always turn to their future, to the direction they're heading in—in spite of fierce competition from peers—and they often begin making preparations to that end while still at university.

All the practical training and experiments, the extracurricular activities and part-time jobs I had as a student kept me busy enough, but I was much busier once I started work, and my time became even more limited when I started a family.

A wide range of experiences that broaden your horizons while you are a student only puts you at an advantage in the future. In closing, I would like to express my wishes for TMDU to continue cultivating individuals who are active in many fields.

Tomoyuki Odagaki, Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology



LACRC TMDU
IN CHILE
Latin American Collaborative Research Center
Santiago de Chile



Contents

- Greetings 1
- Joint Degree Program 2
- PRENEC Progress Report 3
- Project Semesters 4
- LACRC Activity Report 5

Joint Degree Program

Entrance examinations for the cohort of students who will join the fiscal 2019 Joint Degree Program (JDP) in October were conducted by a joint TMDU-University of Chile Academic Committee, which selected one student for what will be the fourth cohort. In this newsletter, we will present the thoughts of this student on her admission to the JDP.

JDP Student for October 2019 Enrollment Decided

Dr. Carla Alessandra Cassana Abad

I was deeply honored to find out the formal decision on my admission to the JDP. I am confident that this program will give me a valuable opportunity to develop and strengthen my research skills in a clinical and surgical context, in order to achieve professional excellence with advanced training in a surgical specialty.

As one of the leading causes of cancer death worldwide, colorectal cancer is a public health issue, and advanced knowledge is required to provide a multidisciplinary approach to diagnosis and treatment of this disease.

In order to become a skilled surgeon, I will need to learn about both clinical practice and clinical research. I believe that this international program between the University of Chile, TMDU and Clínica Las Condes, will provide the training I need to be able to perform early diagnosis and proper treatment of colorectal lesions. Through the JDP, I aim to acquire the necessary knowledge to make a useful contribution to society.



After the entrance examination (from left to right: Professor Miguel O’Ryan, Dr. Cassana, Associate Professor Francisco López, Associate Professor Juan Pablo Torres).

PRENEC Progress Report

The following section offers a report on the latest developments in the Prevention Project for Neoplasia of the Colon and Rectum (PRENEC). The PRENEC screening program was initiated in Concepción, in addition to the six cities of Punta Arenas, Santiago, Valparaíso, Valdivia, Osorno and Coquimbo. Due to management issues in Valparaíso and Concepción, where the project had only just been set in motion, the program has currently been suspended in these two cities. It is hoped that these issues can be swiftly resolved and the PRENEC work resumed. A pilot study of PRENEC that was being undertaken in Paraguay is now complete and preparations are underway for the full-scale launch of this initiative.

Publication of a Paper by Former LACRC Chief and TMDU Faculty Member



On August 20th this year, a paper written by Takuya Okada, Specially Appointed Associate Professor at TMDU (Global Affairs Advancement Division, Institute of Global Affairs) and previous chief of staff at LACRC, entitled “Colorectal cancer risk factors in asymptomatic Chilean population a survey of international collaboration between Japan and Chile”, was published in the European Journal of Cancer Prevention.

This was a case-control study of data from 23,845 PRENEC participants that was conducted between 2012 and 2017 to analyze the risk factors for colorectal cancer in Chileans. It identified a significantly higher incidence of colorectal cancer in men, the elderly, and those with a low intake of dietary fiber. Findings from the group with hypertension and diabetes and the group with high alcohol and/or meat consumption also indicated the possibility of higher incidence among such individuals. These findings offer hope of a link to primary prevention of colorectal cancer in Chile. Dr. Francisco López, who is responsible for the PRENEC program, and the Chilean doctors involved in the project have stated their intentions to put the study’s findings to good use in the pursuit of colorectal cancer prevention.

Excerpt from the European Journal of Cancer Prevention online edition URL for posted content: https://journals.lww.com/eurjcancerprev/Abstract/publishahead/Colorectal_cancer_risk_factors_in_asymptomatic.99188.aspx

Meeting of PRENEC Office Heads



The PRENEC office meeting in progress.

On July 25th, PRENEC office heads gathered for a meeting that was held to coincide with an international symposium and ceremony to mark the opening of a cancer research institute hosted by CLC.

Discussions at the meeting centered on PRENEC operation. There was animated discussion of the problems that have arisen at the various PRENEC centers and measures to facilitate smooth operation of the project, with insights from experiences at each of the offices.

It is hoped that conclusions from this meeting will be reflected in future project operations and that the PRENEC program can continue to be deployed smoothly.

Project Semester Program

Since 2010, TMDU has been dispatching fourth-year medical school students to research institutes in Chile for periods of four to six months with the aim of cultivating basic medical practice skills overseas (the Project Semester Program). This year, two students were assigned to laboratories at the University of Chile, where they commenced their research in early June. The resolutions of these two students for their respective projects are presented below.

Student Diaries

Mr. Yoshihiro Sawaguchi *Department of Infectious Diseases, University of Chile*

Twenty-one countries have Spanish as their official language. Chile is one of them. The single word, “Spanish,” however, covers a whole lot of country-specific idiosyncrasies. In Chile these peculiarities are especially pronounced: ask a Chilean about their Spanish and they’ll say, “los chilenos hablan mal” (Chileans speak really poor Spanish). Curiously enough, Chileans are actually rather proud of this fact. Why this makes them happy I have no idea, but there you go. Bearing these doubts in mind, I recently traveled through the three countries of Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Peruvians and Bolivians speak slowly and their pronunciation is beautiful, so it’s really easy to understand what they’re saying. One day, whilst on my travels and still impressed by how clear the Spanish was, I heard someone speaking a totally different Spanish to that of the locals. As I suspected, I discovered the person was Chilean and they spoke happily about the quirks of Chilean Spanish. This made me realize that, for Chileans, Chilean Spanish is a key element of their identity. In the same way that people from Kansai in Japan are proud of their vernacular, so the Chileans—among the many Spanish-speaking nations—are greatly invested in the Spanish they speak.

My travels led me to this discovery, but on my return, I realized that my sojourn in Chile would end in a little over a month. I’m going to do everything I can to ensure I make the most of the remainder of my stay here.



On Uyuni Salt Flat.

Mr. Taiki Harada *Department of Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Chile*

It’s already been more than three months since I arrived in Chile, meaning that my research period has hit the halfway mark and I’m in the second half. Given that there are several consecutive holidays in September and I’ve made plans to travel then, I’d like to reflect on my time here through August.

In terms of my research, there have been weekly discussions, day-to-day literature searches and data linking, updating of my neural model and the acquisition of relevant knowledge. Most of the programming work is now complete, and of late I’ve been discussing the end-point for this period of research and what steps I should take next, as well as keeping a log of posters and thesis formats. I started this project in 2019 and it looks quite likely I’ll need to continue working on it after my return to Japan. The members of my lab are very cheerful and we’ve become good friends; there have been events and different parties every week, which has been great fun. These friendships have changed with the return home of a short-term exchange student from America, among other things, but everything feels like it’s going well. I’ve recently become acquainted with a member of the laboratory who hails from Turkey, and we’re planning to take a week’s trip to Peru together at the end of September. In my personal life, I was a little under the weather for a while, but have recovered, making sure to consume plenty of hot drinks and get a lot of sleep. For the remainder of my time here, my goal is to work as hard as I can on my research and take everything else in Chilean time.



On route to Professor Pedro’s holiday home for a thank-you party at the end of August.

LACRC Activity Report

Participation in an International Symposium



The opening ceremony (from left to right: Dr. Juan Carlos Acevedo, the founder of the CLC Cancer Research Institute, Dr. López, its director, hospital director May Chomali, and board chairman, Mr. Andrés Navarro).

H-ONCOSUR is an international symposium that is co-sponsored by Brazil's Albert Einstein Israelite Hospital and CLC. In 2019, it was held at CLC from July 25–26. At the symposium, LACRC's Assistant Professor, Tomoyuki Odagaki, gave a presentation on endoscopic treatment of early-stage colorectal cancer.

The symposium also included a ceremony to mark the opening of a cancer research institute* within CLC. PRENEC Director, Dr. López, is the new director of the cancer research institute at CLC.

He spoke about the PRENEC project in his opening remarks on the establishment of the research institute, highlighting the importance of the ties with TMDU in its inception and operation.

*In July 2019, the existing CLC Cancer Center was renamed the CLC Cancer Research Institute.



A commemorative photo with Dr. Cáceres, head of the Orsono PRENEC office (right).



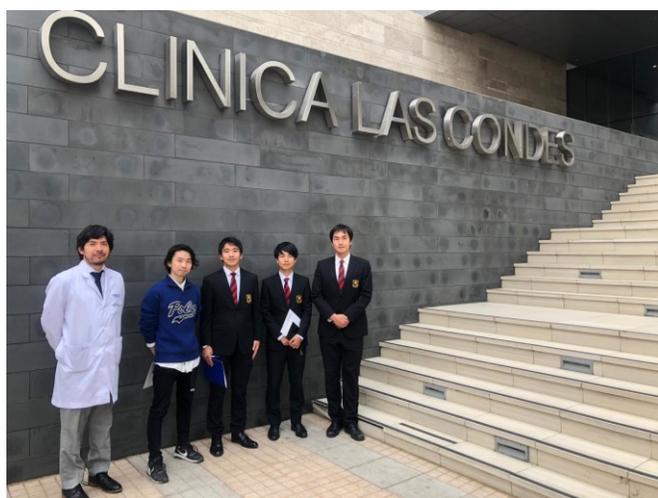
The entrance to the presentation hall.

A Visit From a Group of Keio University Students

Students from the Keio University School of Medicine International Medical Association (IMA) used their summer vacation to make a tour of inspection of medical facilities in various cities throughout South America. They visited Santiago as part of this trip with a view to undertaking a field survey of telemedicine in Chile.

On August 21, these students visited CLC to take a tour of what is the overseas base of TMDU activities. The two TMDU students who are currently in Chile on their Project Semesters also joined the group, which was led by Dr. Alejandro Zárate and encompassed the various departments of CLC.

This was a short visit, but it gave the Keio students a good opportunity to learn about CLC, the TMDU projects and the LACRC office.



At the entrance to CLC.



In front of the LACRC office.

Editor's Note

Chile's President Sebastián Piñera has recently referred to his proposed budget for 2020, which is expected to include a 5.7% increase in the Health Ministry's budget. This extra money is to be spent on improving equipment at public hospitals and health centers, reducing the burden of medical expenses for those enrolled in public health insurance (FONASA) and training highly-specialized doctors. Since PRENEC, which has TMDU involvement, is aimed at public health insurance subscribers, this policy is also expected to benefit the PRENEC project.

I hope this newsletter gives readers insight into our activities in Chile. (Miki Hayakawa, LACRC)

Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU) Latin American Collaborative Research Center Newsletter No.35 September 2019

[Date of Publication] September 30, 2019

[Production] Latin American Collaborative Research Center
Tokyo Medical and Dental University
Clínica Las Condes
Lo Fontecilla 441, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile
Tel: (56-2) 2610 3780