

TMDU graduates are active at the forefront of their field in countries worldwide. Studying abroad helped them deepen their knowledge as healthcare professionals, benefiting both their field and patients in every corner of the globe.

## Letters from TMDU Overseas Alumni

Letter 01

### Valuable Experiences at the Perfect University

Pham Anh Vu Thuy  
University of Medicine and Pharmacy  
from Vietnam



**MY NAME IS** Pham Anh Vu Thuy, from Vietnam. I graduated from the Faculty of Odonto-Stomatology, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in 2000. After graduation, I worked as a dentist at the National Hospital of Odonto-Stomatology in Ho Chi Minh City for several years. I really want to contribute to improving the oral health of Vietnamese people, especially in poor communities that are very far from the big cities. I often went to these communities to give dental lessons to schoolchildren, to provide knowledge of preventive dentistry to school teachers, or to join dental mobile teams for primary oral health care.

During my time working in Vietnam, I noticed the gap in knowledge and tech-



Studying with international students at Department of Oral Health Promotion

nology between developing countries like my country, and well-developed countries like Japan. I never expected to have a chance to study in Japan because in my country, it is very difficult to get a full scholarship to study abroad. It was a great opportunity the first time I met Prof. Yoko Kawaguchi, Department of Oral Health Promotion, TMDU at a training course on dental public health for Southeast Asian countries in Thailand, 2004. She recommended me to apply for the Monbusho scholarship and unbelievably, my dream came true when I was selected as the PhD student at the Department of Oral Health Promotion, TMDU in 2007.

My life of study was certainly busy and full of hard work. However, I often enjoyed seeing the cherry blossom in spring, fireworks in summer, the leaves changing color in autumn, and the snow festival in winter. I especially enjoyed traveling to many beautiful places and tasting many kinds of delicious Japanese food. Furthermore, I made friends with a great number of Japanese and international students who come from dif-



At the gate of TMDU

ferent countries. Looking back over my four years at TMDU (2007-2011), I feel extremely grateful to the people who supported me during my life in Japan. It was hard at the beginning, but my professor and other staff in the department were always extremely generous and willing to understand and help me, despite my mistakes due to the language and culture barriers. I am very pleased to have studied in a perfect university such as TMDU, where I have practiced in high-tech study facilities and trained with high-quality professors and lecturers. I learned a lot of subjects including research methodologies, statistical analysis and data interpretation, and writing scientific papers. I also took part in numerous oral health care activities held in community and schools.

The program was well organized and structured to accommodate learning across a broad range of professional backgrounds. Using various knowledge from TMDU, I conducted my research project regarding periodontal disease and oral malodor in Vietnamese people

and successfully published five articles in international journals during the course. I think the findings from my study project on the PhD program at TMDU are now proving useful for evidence-based dentistry for the treatment and prevention of oral malodor and periodontal diseases in Vietnam. I also took part in some activities outside the university to introduce my country to Japanese and foreign people.

After graduation from TMDU, I came back to Vietnam and worked as lecturer

at the Department of Periodontology, Faculty of Odonto-Stomatology, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City. The knowledge I absorbed and activities I took part in on the course at TMDU and the experience from living in Japan help me a lot in teaching and research. I am contributing to the education of younger generations of dentists using what I achieved during my study in Japan. I have also tried to promote the relationship between TMDU and my university. My



Consulting oral hygiene for children at the clinic

experience with Japanese culture, language and tradition during the four year period in Japan allows me to be part of a bridge of friendship between Japan and Vietnam.

Letter 02

### Trip of a Lifetime

Turki A. Bakhsh  
King Abdulaziz University  
from Saudi Arabia



**MY PAST 4-YEARS** stay in Japan was the most beautiful, challenging and abundant experience in my life. It is well-known to everyone how much Japan is advanced in technology that we see everyday on TV or receive them in our countries. For me, my passion for Japan was something else because I got more insight into Japanese culture from my readings and watching Japanese drama.

After graduation and joining Operative Dentistry Department at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Saudi Arabia as a teaching assistant in 2008, they awarded me a scholarship to study abroad. Hence my personality is always trying to be very unique and very different from my colleagues in the department who studied in USA and UK universities. Upon searching the internet, DEAN'S MESSAGE (Prof. Junji Tagami) of faculty of dentistry in Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU) was the first to pop-up among the Japanese universities. I did not know at that time my future and whole life will change after clicking the link on that day in 2009.

The well-repetition of TMDU in Tokyo with positive responses and prompt

replays by Prof. Tagami and Dr. Alireza Sadr (who became later my Adviser) were the major influencing factors in choosing TMDU specifically.

Living there from October 2009 through September 2013 had inspired and affected me a lot. I still remember my first day in Japan after arriving from Saudi Arabia. Everything was organized and well-prepared by TMDU. They picked me up from the airport and took me to the student dormitory and showed me the neighborhood. Warm welcoming was waiting in TMDU upon meeting Prof. Tagami and his department members in a very friendly atmosphere. Later, many events, trips and activities were organized by Prof. Morio and her team in the International student office center that was the most joyful part after a very hard busy week in the school to break the intense of the alienation



Group picture on visiting a dental clinic in Sendai after the Great Japan Earthquake in 2013



Group picture with TMDU Student Chapter and Kurary Company R&D team

and the home sickness. I still keep every memory that was shared with my friends in Atama beach, Sendai area after earthquake, dental companies, conferences and department parties.

During my study period in Operative Dentistry, I found many differences in the medical field between what I used to see in my country and what I experienced in Japan. The way of welcoming every patient in front of the hospital door at 9 am with official Japanese greeting, playing music in the hospital lobby that would be helpful for the patients' relaxation, as well as the staff, the usage of the most sophisticated medical-technologies in their routine medical examination and providing excellent patient care based on the latest trend in clinical/medical research, and until the patient get discharge, all of these are very exclusive to only this country (Japan).

After 4 years of living there, I did not realize how much I become japanized. My self-confidence has elevated and I became workaholic, open-minded and enthusiastic on my life and profession. This experience had improved me a lot and reflected on my performance and

response to the different challenges during my profession as consultant and as assistant professor in Operative Dentistry department at KAU. In academia and beside the research activities, my general goal is to educate my student on how to optimize the performance of dental fillings and making them long-lasting. Actually, they are keen to know more about Japan and where I graduate from. Interestingly, although most of my students are at undergraduate level, we are now conducting several research

works on Nanoleakage, bond-strength and Tomographic imaging that would enhance their understanding of the academic subject as well as developing their research-skills. Recently, I got rewarded of those diligences when my students obtained a research grant from a well-recognized organization in Saudi Arabia "Saudi Dental Society" to pursue their novel research that is entitled "Time Sensitivity Associated with Application of HEMA-free Adhesive". While from the clinical perspective,

providing excellent patient care using the latest trend in dental management and improving community knowledge in dental public health in Saudi Arabia are the most important goals.

Actually, this experience was all great, all rewarding and I cannot express the extent of thanks and gratitude. I enjoyed my stay in Japan and hope to keep in touch with those very polite and kind people. I will always have Japan in my mind & will keep the heartfelt memories alive!

### Letter 03

## Experience of Living in Japan



**Osmar Kenji Yagi**  
University of Sao Paulo  
from Brazil



**IN 1994, AFTER** finishing the fourth year of the Medical Residence Program in Gastrointestinal Tract Surgery at the University of Sao Paulo, I obtained a Monbusho scholarship to study in Japan.

I chose Japan because it is well known that this country is the most important center for diagnosis and also treatment of digestive disease globally. The results attained by Japanese surgeons in the treatment of gastrointestinal cancers are amazing. I elected TMDU because it was one of the most important Institutions in this field and at that time headed by the renowned Prof. Mitsuo Endo.

For me, the choice could not have been more appropriate. Thanks to Prof. Endo and so many others from the Department of Surgery, I had the opportunity to take part and thereby learn many types of surgery, performed so differently and meticulously. In my opinion, the most substantial aspect of learning about surgical techniques was the standardized lymph node dissection. From my point of view, this is the element that really ensures that the results of treatment of gastrointestinal cancers are better in the East than in Western countries.

When I started my research project towards a PhD degree, I was fortunate to be introduced to Prof. Yasuhito Yuasa, head of Molecular Oncology Department. He is a brilliant scientist, with a boundless kindness, who taught me patiently and thoroughly about molecular biology and cancer. With his direction and with the help of all the members of his Department, I was able to publish four papers in prestigious international journals and coauthor many other papers, in addition to my thesis.

Thanks to the amazing and unforgettable Japanese people, beyond this medical and scientific knowledge, I had the chance to learn about many aspects of Japanese culture, language, art, history and food. My ancestry is Japanese. My father was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture and my mother's grandparents were born in Hiroshima Prefecture. I also had opportunities to meet wonderful people from many other countries who were living in Japan that time. Every person and every memory will remain in my mind for the rest of my life.

I returned to Sao Paulo in 1999, and went back to work at the same University of Sao Paulo, where I try somehow to convey this unforgettable experience



My family: Osmar, Heloisa, Isabela, Claudia and Ana Yagi

of living and learning in Tokyo to many people, especially the residents. Fortunately, almost all the surgeons here use the Japanese Methods and Treatment Guidelines for the treatment of gastrointestinal cancers. This is due in part to the superiority of the Japanese results, but also due to the fact that we have a great opportunity to learn with such distinguished teachers. Now, specifically in my area of Brazil, the challenge is in establishing laparoscopy and robotic surgery. For Brazilians, it is very important to continue these exchanges of knowledge.

Last but not least, during our stay at Japan, my wife Claudia gave birth to our daughters Isabela and Heloisa. From the point of view of my family too, the experience was incredible. In 2005, Ana Luisa was born here in Sao Paulo, and now we are a family of five people. Since I came back to Brazil, I have been fortunate enough to go back to Tokyo to see friends at TMDU twice. Other friends came to Brazil and I had the chance to welcome them here. I hope such friendships continue forever.