

# Newsletter

Vol. 15



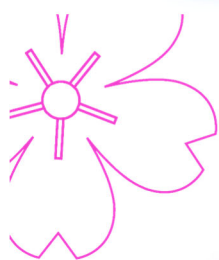
**CU-TMDU Research and Education Collaboration Center,  
Thailand**

**September 30th, 2020**



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## ① Greeting from the New Satellite Office Director



Professor Keiichi Akita.

TMDU's satellite office in Thailand has been developed primarily by Professor Yoko Kawaguchi on the basis of long-term academic exchanges between the faculties of dentistry. Having signed academic exchange agreements with the Faculty of Dentistry in 1991 and with the Faculty of Medicine in 2002, Chulalongkorn University (CU) and Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU) have a long history of international student exchange spanning more than 25 years, and TMDU currently has exchange agreements with the College of Public Health Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering at CU. The Chulalongkorn University – Tokyo Medical and Dental University Research and Education Collaboration Center (CU-TMDU Research and Education Collaboration Center) was established within CU on November 23, 2010 on the basis of these academic exchange programs as an overseas satellite office of TMDU.

Moreover, in 2018 we opened the TMDU-MU Partnership Siriraj Office on the basis of an academic exchange agreement between the medical faculties of TMDU and Mahidol University Siriraj Hospital and the conclusion of an inter-university agreement, with the aim of establishing a Joint Degree Program in collaboration with Siriraj Hospital.

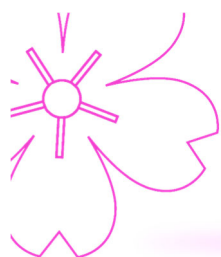
TMDU has currently established Joint Degree Programs with the CU Faculty of Dentistry and Mahidol University Siriraj Hospital, and is working to develop a wide range of additional academic exchange programs with other universities in Thailand. Within this context, our satellite office in Thailand is expected to play a key role as a strategic base for TMDU's work in Southeast Asia. The coronavirus pandemic has made travel between countries very difficult, however. This means ties with members of the TMDU alumni who are active in Thailand are even more crucial in developing and maintaining these long-established relations with academic institutions in Thailand. We aim to further promote activities that will deepen these bonds.

It has been a very difficult year for international academic exchange, but we are looking to explore and implement a range of activities that will serve to increase TMDU's presence within the global academic community. ■

✿ Professor Keiichi Akita

Department of Clinical Anatomy

Director, TMDU Overseas Satellite Office in Thailand



## ② The COVID-19 Situation in Thailand

**N**o new local infections of the coronavirus have been confirmed in Thailand, leaving the total number of infections at 3,390 with 58 deaths, and putting Thailand in 117<sup>th</sup> position in terms of cumulative COVID-19 infections by country (as of August 22, 2020). The coronavirus case count being so low in Thailand is nothing short of miraculous, given that it attracts large numbers of tourists from China in general, and Wuhan in particular. The first case of coronavirus in Thailand was discovered on January 13 following infection by a Chinese tourist. The number of cases increased gradually thereafter, but then spiraled following a cluster of COVID-19 infections among spectators at a Muay Thai boxing match held on March 6. A week later, new local infections were exceeding 100 cases per day, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency on March 26. Nonetheless, the ongoing implementation of stringent measures has succeeded in stemming the spread of the coronavirus in Thailand.

According to the global COVID-19 Index (GCI, an index that was developed in Malaysia through a collaboration between the private and public sector ) that summarizes information on active cases of the coronavirus, numbers of tests conducted per population, and the efficacy of measures to combat the spread of the virus, Thailand's GCI Recovery Index totals 82.27 points, putting it at the top of the global rankings for 184 countries worldwide, and positioning it as one of the countries to have been most successful in suppressing the virus. Thailand's success in containing the spread of the coronavirus is primarily due to the imposition of a rigorous monitoring system, which tracks the following parameters across multiple divisions, including regions, counties, prefectures, districts, central locations, etc.

- Monitoring of designated quarantine facilities
- Monitoring of potential (suspected) and confirmed infections
- Monitoring of doctors and healthcare workers
- Monitoring of coronavirus infection clusters

When a diagnostic test for COVID-19 yields a positive result, the hospital and/or testing facility that treats the active case is required under the Communicable Diseases Act B.E. 2558 (1015) to notify the Situation Awareness Team (SAT) of the Emergency Operation Center at the Department of Disease Control. SAT then reports this information to the operations group within 12 hours, with the main aim of confirming the diagnosis, identifying the source of infection and tracking contacts, but also to facilitate the implementation of measures that stem the spread of infection and manage the disease.

People who have been confirmed to be infected are required to take a detailed survey of past movements. Specifically, any travel and all movements in the 14 days prior to the onset of symptoms, and all movement for 14 days following the end of treatment in an isolated hospital room, are thoroughly investigated to identify the source of infection and track contact. Anyone who was in the same space as an infected patient or who has had

physical contact with them is also subject to monitoring. These contacts are divided into two groups: high-risk and low-risk. All contacts are required to quarantine for 14 days. Contacts are required to notify the Disease Investigation Team immediately if they develop a fever, and they should refrain from going out and must stay at home unless absolutely necessary. Frequent hand washing and wearing a mask to protect yourself and others is also advised, and contacts must report on the state of their health via daily telephone calls from the Disease Investigation Team.

Another major contributor to Thailand’s success in identifying high-risk groups promptly, tracing contacts and thereby easing the spread of the virus, is the country’s 1.2 million Village Health Volunteers (VHV). With the help of staff at the Subdistrict Health Promotion Hospital, these volunteers stressed the necessity of visiting the nation’s upwards of 12 million households, providing information on the virus and developing strategies for social distancing. They argued for the need to effectively control and prevent the spread of infection at the community level by tracking movement based on identified risk groups. The World Health Organization has also praised Thailand’s VHVs for their ability to process information, news and the behavior and movements of individual households, as well as their swift identification of risk groups. These volunteers are unnamed heroes who have helped Thailand avert the crisis posed by the coronavirus, and provide an exemplary role model for infectious disease control in other countries.

In hospitals, medical staff are playing a key role in preventing the spread of infection. The widespread adoption of measures such as teleconferencing to diagnose outpatients, depressurized rooms to contain infected patients, proper use of PPE (personal protective equipment), and the use of partitions during testing have all helped to prevent the occurrence of clusters in Thai hospitals.

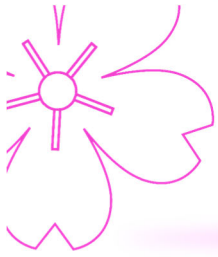
Thailand has introduced numerous measures to stem the spread of coronavirus infection, including requests that people refrain from going out, recommendations to work from home, use of “Thaichana”—a contact tracing smartphone application—by department store and restaurant customers, the introduction of social distancing measures on public transport, and calls for contact restrictions with unspecified large groups. These measures have been effective in reducing the number of infections, particularly in densely-populated Bangkok, where some facilities that are vulnerable to the spread of infection have been closed. Healthcare workers remain poised to fight the virus at the national, prefectural, county and community levels. The authorities have also stepped in, easing the standards on budgeting for virus testing after the initial budget for test subsidies ran out. COVID-19 tests are currently being paid for out of the National Health Security Office’s budget. Ultimately, however, the understanding and cooperation of the general public is critical to effectively controlling the coronavirus. ■

✿ Unit Chief, Asada Methasate

Mahidol University – Siriraj Hospital, Surgical Department, Minimally Invasive Surgery Unit



Social distancing inside the hospital.



### ③ The “New Normal” in Dentistry in Thailand

**O**ur world has been altered by the coronavirus pandemic, which is not only affecting all areas of our lives but also impacting the world of dentistry.

On March 23, 2020, Prime Minister of Thailand General Prayut Chan-o-cha declared a state of emergency in response to the coronavirus, and ordered department stores, malls, restaurants and other public places where people gather to close in a bid to prevent the spread of infection. According to the latest government announcement, the state of emergency has been extended until the end of September, but economic activity is resuming across all industries and people are adjusting to “new normal” lifestyles.

The spread of the coronavirus in Thailand has currently slowed, but Thais continue to take rigorous preventive measures to prevent infection, including maintaining social distancing rules and wearing masks. Chulalongkorn Dental Hospital, which has reopened in the wake of the coronavirus, is introducing measures against the virus that have become the “new normal” in addition to “standard preventive measures.”

- Patient temperatures are taken prior to consultation and are checked for respiratory symptoms and any history of foreign travel, etc.
- Prior to treatment, patients are requested to gargle using a mouthwash that is effective against COVID-19.
- Doctors and staff wear PPE (personal protective equipment), including face shields and isolation gowns.
- Extraoral vacuum suction is used when performing treatments that generate aerosols.
- Consultation rooms are ventilated regularly.

Chulalongkorn Dental Hospital is continuing to provide safe dental treatment in an effort to beat the coronavirus. ■

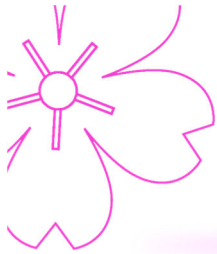
✿ Issareeya Ekprachayakoon  
Visiting Associate Professor  
Chulalongkorn University



Left: Ventilation systems inside and outside the hospital.



Doctors and medical staff wearing PPE.



## ④ TMDU's Joint Degree Program with Mahidol University

The Joint Degree Doctoral Program in Medical Sciences between Tokyo Medical and Dental University and Mahidol University (MU), a Joint Degree Program that the two institutions have been working on for the past four years, was officially launched in April 2020 after approval by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology on June 26, 2019.

This doctoral program is for doctors specializing in surgery. The aim is to develop medical personnel who are highly specialized surgeons with expertise particularly in the field of cancer treatment, who have the research skills to respond promptly to the diversification of medical needs, and who can be leaders in medical and healthcare science both in Japan and the ASEAN region. The program will draw on advanced research skills and knowledge in training cancer treatment specialists available at TMDU, and the abundant case numbers and clinical research findings offered by Mahidol University Siriraj Hospital Faculty of Medicine will facilitate advanced research guidance and practical education for surgeons. Surgeons who complete this program are expected to work internationally to resolve common issues in Japan and the ASEAN region, including the provision of advanced medical care at lower costs in super-aged societies, the development of highly-skilled medical personnel in line with the medical infrastructure evolution, and the cultivation of a research mindset among clinicians.

The program was conceived and planned on the basis of the educational and research-based exchanges cultivated by TMDU and Mahidol University to date. The catalyst for these exchanges between TMDU and Siriraj Hospital came when Dr. Asada Methasate, who graduated from the TMDU Faculty of Medicine as a Japanese Government Scholarship Student, joined the faculty of the Department of Surgery at Siriraj Hospital on his return to Thailand. Following this, numerous surgeons have studied in the surgical departments at TMDU and enrolled in postgraduate programs of study here, further fostering the relationship. The curriculum reflects the opinions of the professors at Mahidol University Siriraj Hospital Faculty of Medicine who either studied as students in the TMDU Faculty of Medicine as postgraduates or underwent training at the TMDU Medical Hospital. In consequence, this is a systematic curriculum that aims to develop education that is grounded in high-level academic research and give surgeons a wide range of advanced knowledge and techniques that extends beyond a narrow range of research fields, in anticipation of the globalization of higher medical education and specialized surgical education at universities in both Japan and Thailand.

This year, three Thai surgeons entered the program, but all ceremonies, including both the Opening Ceremony and Entrance Ceremony had to be canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Bangkok is in lockdown and universities have been ordered to close, but since the students are doctors and work at hospitals, they have been able to continue working under relatively normal conditions. Mahidol University is providing lessons online, which means that the students will be able to earn their Thai credits, but class provision at TMDU is inadequate and it is not currently clear whether the students will be able to travel to Japan as planned. Our hope is that the program will be able to proceed as scheduled, and that we will be able to continue working with Mahidol University to that end. ■

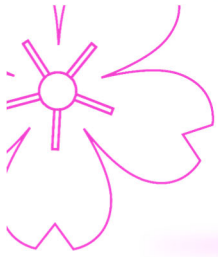


At the admissions booth for the Joint Degree Program that was held in Bangkok in the summer of 2019—from right to left: Dr. Thawatchai Akaraviputh and Dr. Asada Methasate of the Siriraj Hospital Department of Surgery, Professor Tetsuya Taga, Acting Director of the Institute of Global Affairs, and Professor Keiichi Akita.

✧ Professor Keiichi Akita

Department of Clinical Anatomy

Director, TMDU Overseas Satellite Office in Thailand



## ⑤ TMDU's Joint Degree Program with Chulalongkorn University



From right to left: 2019 admissions, Sansanee Wijarn, Pornchanok Sangsuriyothai and Duangtawan Rintanalert.

TMDU's Joint Degree Program (JDP) with Chulalongkorn University has now entered its fifth year. The three students who joined the program in 2019 were scheduled to commence research in the Department of Orthodontic Science and the Department of Maxillofacial Orthognathics at TMDU in June 2020, as per schedule. However, the coronavirus pandemic means that it is currently difficult for these students to enter Japan.

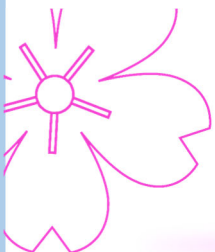
Fortunately, the content of the research topics to be pursued by the three students has been confirmed through discussions between the two universities during monthly meetings of the Course Management Committee. In consequence, the decision has been taken to

allow the students to continue their studies at Chulalongkorn University, where they will master the use of experimental equipment and become accustomed with data analytics. To this end, TMDU professors are contacting the students online and providing meticulous guidance, including clarifying their proficiency, and discussing and resolving any queries they may have. They are making all the preparations possible to ensure that the students' research can progress smoothly once they arrive in Japan.

We will continue to take appropriate measures to ensure that their studies can proceed without delay even in the face of the unexpected situation posed by the global spread of the coronavirus. ■

\* Professor Takashi Ono

Department of Orthodontic Science



## ⑥ Discussion Café at Mahidol University

On Tuesday June 9, 2020, we held a two-hour "Discussion Café" for 15 students (years 2–6) from the medical faculty of Mahidol University, with which TMDU has an inter-university exchange agreement, and 15 students (years 2–6) from TMDU.

This Discussion Café is an international exchange event where students from TMDU and affiliated schools both in Japan and overseas hold exhaustive discussion in English with a view to resolving complex international health problems through exchanges that transcend racial and cultural backgrounds and different field of specialty.



Students participating in the Discussion Café.

This inaugural Discussion Café overcame the obstacle of distance by utilizing the web conferencing software Zoom and provided a rare opportunity to acquire a range of perspectives and networks across countries, races, cultures and fields of study during the coronavirus pandemic that has made international travel impossible for everyone, international students included. The fact that we were able to hold this type of event in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic is the result of advances in telecommunication and the academic exchanges between our two universities, which extend over many years, and reflects the passion and determination of our students to collaborate in the resolving international problems regardless of culture or race.



Group session (reflections).

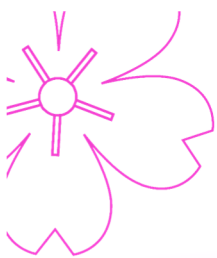
Participating students introduced themselves and their universities, after which they were divided into two mixed-university groups of six, with students from each group leading active discussions around three topics relating to “Responses to COVID-19.” The students then gave product presentations and held general discussions under the watchful eyes of professors from the two universities.

The students were asked to complete a questionnaire following the event, with many stating that this opportunity to “Reaffirm their English language proficiency and skills had boost-

ed their motivation” and that they had “Recognized common points of interest that transcend cultural differences.” Their responses confirm that the event provided invaluable stimulus that can raise awareness of social issues, broaden perspectives and serve as an alternative to overseas travel in a time when restrictions on movement make face-to-face exchange difficult.

The success of this Zoom Discussion Café is significant in that it gave us an opportunity to identify ways of pursuing international student exchanges at TMDU post coronavirus, and we will continue to investigate this matter in hopes of further development.■

✧ Global Advancement Administrative Unit, Institute of Global Affairs



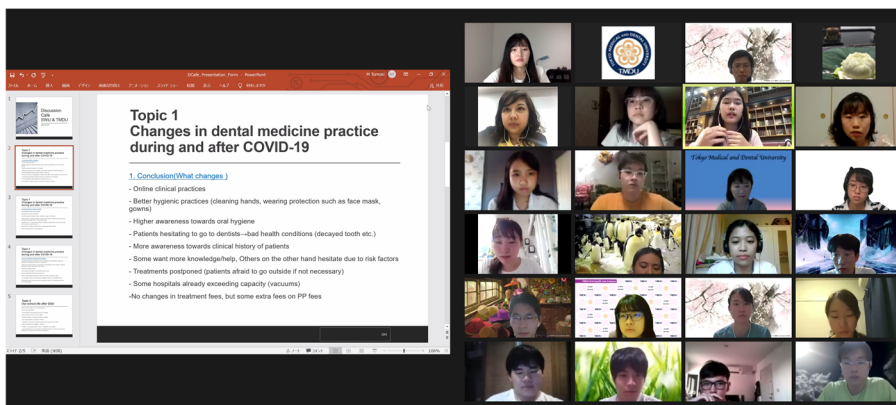
## ⑦ Discussion Caf é at Srinakharinwirot University

**O**n August 26, 2020, we held a two-hour “Discussion Caf é”—an English-language discussion event that started at 6:30 PM Japan time, during which students from TMDU and Srinakharinwirot University dental faculty gathered to discuss two topics: “Dentistry with-corona and post-corona” and “Necessary and unnecessary things in student life with-corona and post-corona.” Twenty students from TMDU (medical faculty, dental faculty, the School of Oral Health Care Sciences and the School of Health Care Sciences; years 1–6) and 25 students from the faculty of dentistry at Srinakharinwirot University (years 2–6) participated in the event. The participating students led group discussions and gave presentations online under the watchful eyes of professors and doctors from the two universities.

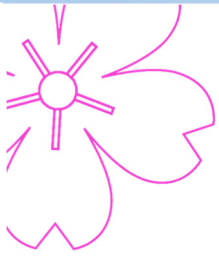
Every year, we send students to and accept students from Srinakharinwirot University on short-term exchange programs. Specifically, TMDU sends students to Srinakharinwirot University every summer, but this year’s summer dispatch was canceled. The fact that we were able to hold this online event under the current circumstances is in large part due to the academic exchanges between the two universities to date, and this online Discussion Caf é provided an invaluable opportunity to students from both universities to meet at a time when travel between Japan and Thailand is impossible.

I think it is very important for us to maintain exchange with affiliated schools through events like this, at a time when it is difficult for people to travel.■

✧ Professor Naoko Seki  
Institute of Global Affairs



Group discussion.



## ⑧ TMDU accepts Short-term Visiting Students from the CU Public Health Program

The School of Health Care Sciences at TMDU and the College of Public Health Sciences at Chulalongkorn University signed an student exchange agreement in November 2013, and since it began accepting CU students in 2014, TMDU takes in CU students for 10-day short-term exchange programs every year in June and July. Between 2014 and 2019, TMDU accepted 52 CU students (14 undergraduates, 26 postgraduates and 12 doctoral students) and faculty members. These programs involve visits to various TMDU facilities, including the Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, Center for Transfusion Medicine and Cell Therapy, Bioresource Research Center, and the Clinical Laboratory / Blood Transfusion Department / Pathology Department of the TMDU Medical Hospital, research seminar presentations from CU students and faculty members, and participation in biomedical laboratory science seminars. CU students are individually assigned to medical technology track laboratories, where they spend approximately three days engaging in research and practical training. Following the program, one participating CU student undertook experiments in the medical technology laboratory for some 100 days for joint research purposes. This entry into the field of biomedical laboratory sciences by a CU student greatly inspired postgraduate laboratory students at TMDU, who are thoroughly enjoying these exchanges. ■

\* Professor Motoji Sawabe

Department of Molecular Pathology



Visit to the Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine (July 2019).



Farewell party (July 2019).

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Location of TMDU'S Satellite Office in Thailand

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