

**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

## Veni, vidi, vici



**Koji Sasaki**  
M.D., Hematology Oncology Fellow  
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center



Koji Sasaki

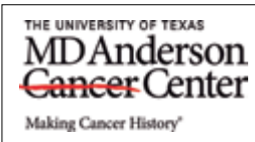
**IT IS MY** pleasure and an honor to write a brief contribution to alumni members at Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU). Time flies so fast. I graduated from the Division of Medicine at TMDU in 2006. I remember the day I wrote a comment to my future self in 10 years in a student yearbook saying “Work hard to be a good doctor!”. After graduation, I spent 4 additional years on a residency and hematology fellowship at TMDU and its affiliated hospitals. These ten years at TMDU formed my identity to be a professional academician which remains unchanged and will stay with me throughout my life.

While on rotation at TMDU, a medical

student might come to realize that cancer is the leading cause of death, and the majority of patients pass away from a clearly known diagnosis rather than from an undiagnosed rare disease. Even with the current best practice therapy, survival of patients with advanced-stage cancer is still challenging, though the molecular understanding of cancer biology has substantially progressed over a decade. Clearly, further breakthroughs are needed to improve symptom control, quality of life, as well as survival. Imagine one day a patient with cancer enjoying a “normal” life without fear of losing a part of him- or herself, and one day people not understanding the meaning of “chemo” in the presence of effective therapy without toxicity.

Touched by the hearts and grief of patients and their families, I followed the natural bent of my passion, and pursued my early academic carrier in the United States. Academia has no borders, and opportunities are everywhere if you seek, knock, and challenge.

MD Anderson Cancer Center is ranked #1 for cancer care in the Best Hospitals survey published in the U.S. News & World Report, and has been the leading cancer institution for the past 75 years and a global leader in cancer research. The mission of MD Anderson Cancer Center is to eliminate cancer globally through outstanding programs that integrate patient care, research and prevention, and through education. To achieve this goal, the institution initiated the Cancer Moon Shots program to aim at drastic improvement in cancer survival within 10 years, and currently operates more than 1200 clinical trials at the single institution. MD Anderson also collaborates with institutions and individuals worldwide, sharing practices in treatment, education and prevention to impact cancer care across the globe.



MD Anderson Logo to symbolize institutional mission to end cancer

Class of 2016 - Hematology Oncology Fellowship, MD Anderson Cancer Center



The Global Academic Program supports MD Anderson’s Sister Institution Network, the largest global network of cancer centers working collaboratively to end cancer.

I was fortunate to join MD Anderson as a fellow after the completion of my 3-year medicine residency in New York. Starting residency and fellow-

ship over could be a tough carrier decision. However, a well-trained physician at TMDU has guaranteed competency and ability through its excellent training. Without the undergraduate medical education, as well as the residency and fellowship training at TMDU, I believe I could not have passed through each competition process. I am proud

of being a graduate of TMDU. Likely, I will proceed with my career as a faculty at MD Anderson this July, and am looking forward to contributing to the global cooperation between TMDU and MD Anderson to conquer cancer together. Someday, we will bring breaking news to patients and their families, and they will say “Veni, vidi, vici!!”.

Letter 02

## TMDU, My Home University



**Alireza Sadr**  
D.D.S., Ph.D, Acting Associate Professor  
University of Washington School of Dentistry



Alireza Sadr

**IT HAS BEEN** two years since I left TMDU and 14 years since I first walked onto the TMDU campus. Upon completing my D.D.S. at the National University of Iran, I started to practice general dentistry but soon developed a passion for dental science, as a way to go beyond the “drill-and-fill” daily routine. I visited Prof. Amir Ghasemi, one of my mentors who was a visiting researcher at TMDU. He introduced me to Prof. Junji Tagami in Cariology and Operative Dentistry, who was very welcoming. My first experience of Japan left me no choice but to pursue my goals at TMDU.

Curious to find out why replacement of failed restorations accounted for more than half of restorative dentistry

procedures, I began my Ph.D. research by experimenting on clinical factors affecting the success of direct adhesives, a project that led to a dissertation and four peer-reviewed publications. Under Prof. Tagami’s supervision, I mastered most of the common mechanical, microscopic and analytical test methodologies for dental materials and hard tissues, and attempted to develop my nanoindentation test approach.

In 2009, thanks to a rare chance to apply for a position at TMDU, I started working as a full-time faculty member at the Global COE for tooth and bone research. It was a privilege to oversee graduate students from Japan and elsewhere. I launched an optics study group with the graduate students and investigated optical coherence tomography (OCT), a new assessment tool for dental tissues and materials. Currently, only a few dental schools and institutes are active in dental OCT research, among which are leaders such as UCSF and TMDU. We organized the first interna-

tional symposium on OCT in Tokyo and worked with industry to develop a clinical system.

Next, while still a faculty member of the department, I joined a project to promote TMDU, attract outstanding students and develop interuniversity agreements. Despite my passion for TMDU and Japan, I decided to take another leap by accepting an offer at the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle. I am now using my TMDU knowledge and experience to teach dentistry, provide patient care and pursue research in my newly established laboratory, Biomimetics Biomaterials Biophotonics Biomechanics & Technology (B4T), at UW.

TMDU is my family’s home and we miss it. My wife did her master’s and Ph.D. at TMDU and worked there, and our daughter and son were born at the TMDU hospital. So I hope we can promote exchange between TMDU and UW.



Flag to answer the “Where are you from?” question. I was born in the UK, went to school in Iran, went to grad school and started my family and career in Japan, and now live and work in the US.



Cariology and Operative Dentistry Department Photo in 2014



Japanese cherry blossoms at the University of Washington, a chance for Hanami.



My son was born at TMDU two years ago, just before we left Japan.