

ASUNARO Award Journey: Memorable Connections Between Japan and Taiwan in Pediatric Dentistry



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First and foremost, I sincerely thank Dr. Sano and the members of the Japanese Society of Pediatric Dentistry for awarding me the “ASUNARO Award.” It is a great honor to be Taiwan’s first recipient and to take part in this meaningful journey to Japan. I am also deeply grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Nai-Chia Teng, and Dr. Hsuan-Lu Alicia Ko, Vice President of Taiwan Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (TAPD), for their invaluable guidance and support, which made this experience truly enriching.

December 2, 2024

Thanks to the thoughtful arrangements by the members of the JSPD, we were warmly welcomed and comfortably settled at the Hotel new Hankyu Osaka.

That night, Prof. Nakano and Dr. Tanaka, along with other JSPD members, hosted a delightful welcome dinner at Yutaka Restaurant. Over delicious cuisine and a pleasant atmosphere, we discussed cultural differences between Japan and Taiwan, as well as topics related to pediatric dentistry. It was a perfect beginning to this incredible journey.



A cheerful welcome dinner with JSPD members at Yutaka Restaurant

December 3, 2024

The following day, we were warmly received by Prof. Nakano, Assoc. Prof. Okawa, Asst. Prof. Ogaya and other dentists from the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, along with Assoc. Prof. Murakami from the Department of Special Care Dentistry at Osaka University Dental Hospital.

In the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, we observed several impressive design features, such as horizontal dental chairs that minimize the time and discomfort of backrest adjustments. These chairs also include built-in handpieces to save space and prevent wiring clutter. Papoose boards with netting and a double-layered wrapping method provided secure and stable immobilization for young patients. The clinic were equipped with an innovative teaching camera system, enabling real-time procedure viewing to enhance students' understanding of clinical techniques.

Another admirable aspect of Osaka University Dental Hospital is its highly detailed initial assessment forms. Parents are required to record their children's diet for one week, including meal contents, portion sizes, and meal times. This enables dentists to better understand the relationship between the child's diet and oral health. Furthermore, the step-by-step appointment arrangements reflect a comprehensive and gradual treatment approach, emphasizing total patient care and aiming to establish a true dental home for children.



Photo with Prof. Nakano and Assoc. Prof. Okawa in front of Osaka University Dental Hospital.



Teaching camera

生活習慣記録表 (食事カード) お子さんの1週間の生活を、例にならってご記入下さい。

記入方法: ①食事、②お茶、③お菓子、④お菓子以外の飲み物、⑤お菓子以外の飲み物、⑥お菓子以外の飲み物、⑦お菓子以外の飲み物、⑧お菓子以外の飲み物、⑨お菓子以外の飲み物、⑩お菓子以外の飲み物

最終日を行った日に、お子さんのお名前には▲を、保護者の名前には●を記入して下さい。

氏名 (小児 No.)

	例	月 日 曜	月 日 曜	月 日 曜	月 日 曜	月 日 曜	月 日 曜	月 日 曜	月 日 曜
朝食	7:30 牛乳 1杯 バナナ 1本 りんごジュース 1杯 味噌汁 1杯 ごはん 1杯								
	8:30 牛乳 1杯 りんごジュース 1杯 ごはん 1杯								
	12:00 牛乳 1杯 ごはん 1杯 味噌汁 1杯 ごはん 1杯								
	15:00 牛乳 1杯 りんごジュース 1杯 ごはん 1杯								
夕食	18:00 牛乳 1杯 ごはん 1杯 味噌汁 1杯 ごはん 1杯								
	21:00 牛乳 1杯 りんごジュース 1杯 ごはん 1杯								
備考									
印刷: 1/2024/08									
発行: 歯学部 歯学部									
〒565-0871 大阪府吹田市 豊崎									

Dietary record form



Visit to the clinic at the Department of Pediatric Dentistry.

Next, we visited the Department of Special Care Dentistry and toured its well-designed facilities. Thoughtful features include cushions for supporting patients with cerebral palsy, weighted blankets for comforting patients with autism, visual cards illustrating treatment steps, tactile tooth models for hands-on understanding by visually impaired patients, and papoose boards with a fishing net design that is durable and easy to clean in case of vomiting or spills. The clinic also utilizes anti-slip, shock-absorbing mats and elevated wiring systems to ensure smooth accessibility for wheelchair-bound patients. These details exude warmth and empathy toward patients with special needs.



Photo with Assoc. Prof. Murakami at the Department of Special Care Dentistry.



Special cushion for cerebral palsy patients



Tooth models for visually impaired patients



7-kilogram weighted blankets



Papoose board with fishing net



Visual cards illustrate treatment steps

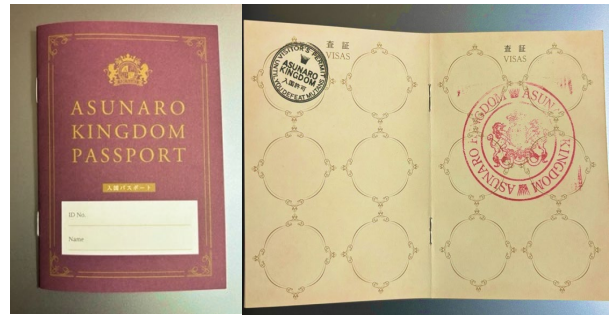


Wheelchair-accessible clinic

After the visit in Osaka University Dental Hospital, Prof. Nakano accompanied us to Shin-Osaka Station, where we boarded the Shinkansen to Toyama to visit Dr. Sano's clinic, "ASUNARO KINGDOM." The clinic's atmosphere was worlds apart from a typical clinical setting. As its name symbolizes, the clinic is a dreamland for children—a magical castle filled with joy. Every corner is thoughtfully decorated, and staff members dress in Disney-like costumes. Children are able to learn proper brushing techniques surrounded by cheerful singing, and those who behaved well could play shooting games to win prizes. This cheerful and playful environment is captivating, making me admire how fortunate the children here are.



At Shin-Osaka Station on the Shinkansen, heading to Toyama.



Appointment card designed as a passport



Photo with Dr. Sano at ASUNARO KINGDOM.



The angel is teaching the brushing song.





ASUNARO KINGDOM visit and activity experience.



Post-visit reflection and discussion

As the day came to a close, Dr. Sano treated us to a delightful Italian dinner at “KENTARO,” where we conversed about travel, cuisine, and music. Dr. Sano’s refined lifestyle and versatile talents left me deeply impressed. We ended the day with a restful night at Hotel JAL City Toyama.



Enjoying a delightful Italian dinner with Dr. Sano at KENTARO.

After visiting the Osaka University Dental Hospital and ASUNARO Kingdom, I observed the differences between Japanese and Taiwanese approaches to pediatric and special needs dentistry. Japanese children exhibited better compliance and more stable behavior during treatments, while parents showed greater respect for the expertise of dentists. This made me reflect on the importance of improving societal health education and raising public awareness of oral health to advance the overall environment for pediatric dentistry.

Another notable difference was the regional variations in health insurance systems. In Taiwan, treatment preferences are sometimes influenced by insurance coverage policies rather than medical advice, which could compromise treatment quality. This prompts reflection on potential adjustments to prevent economic factors from dominating treatment quality.

Japanese dentists’ careful attention to detail, particularly in clinic design and treatment workflows, was truly inspiring. The mature collaboration with dental hygienists allowed for refined task delegation and comprehensive patient care. Overcoming the barriers to promoting hygienists system and finding the balance in collaboration between dentists and hygienists remains an essential challenge for Taiwan.

Most importantly, witnessing Dr. Sano’s dedication to creating a child-friendly dental environment, where regular check-ups significantly reduced caries prevalence, is deeply moving. It reminds me that the ultimate goal of pediatric dentistry is not merely treating cavities but promoting lifelong oral health habits.

December 4, 2024

Thanks to Dr. Sano's hospitality and arrangements, and Prof. Nakano's company throughout, I had the unique opportunity to wear a kimono for the first time during our tour of Kanazawa-shi, a city rich in Hokuriku culture. In the refreshing weather, we visited iconic locations such as Higashi Chaya District and Kenroku-en.

For lunch, we enjoyed delicious soba at the restaurant "Buemon Otoyu" in Higashi Chaya District, followed by a gold leaf ice cream dessert at "Hakuichi Higashiyama." After strolling through the quaint and historic streets of Higashi Chaya, we headed to Kenroku-en, one of the three most beautiful gardens in Japan. We were fortunate to visit at the end of autumn, when vibrant maple leaves and ginkgo trees brightened the scenery.



Charming autumn leaves in Kenroku-en



Kanazawa tour: exploring Higashi Chaya District and Kenroku-en, with Kimono experience.

In the evening, we toured the Masuda Sake Brewery (榊田酒造店) and its beautifully renovated facilities, including a bar, café, and restaurant. Dr. Sano later hosted a farewell dinner at Iso Cuisine Shogetsu (磯料理 松月), where we enjoyed exquisite local seafood, including Toyama's famous white shrimp. During dinner, we discussed pediatric dentistry challenges and explored solutions through closer Japan-Taiwan collaboration. Dr. Sano also encouraged us to stay true to our mission of improving children's oral health, which left a profound impact on me.



Visit to Masuda Sake Brewery (榊田酒造店), and its partner bar, café, and restaurant.

Ending the journey with a delicious dinner at Iso Cuisine Shogetsu (磯料理 松月) in a heartwarming and cozy setting.

With gratitude to Dr. Sano, Prof. Nakano, and the JSPD members for their warm hospitality and thoughtful arrangements, I look forward to deeper academic exchanges and strengthening the friendship between the Japanese and Taiwanese pediatric dentistry communities for a brighter future in children's oral care.