

**Shangyon Park**

Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Yonsei university

**Yeonjin Ju**

**Jungmin Eum**

Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Pusan national university

As an ASUNARO award recipient, we had the invaluable opportunity to connect with young pediatric dentists in Japan, thanks to the support of the Japanese Society of Pediatric Dentistry and Dr. Sano. Visiting the Asunaro Dental Clinic and experiencing Japanese dental culture firsthand was truly enriching. Before the pandemic, there was a direct flight from Seoul to Toyama that took only about an hour, but now, unfortunately, the direct route is no longer available, requiring multiple layovers. Residents from Busan had to take three different flights to reach Toyama. We hope that the flight route is restored soon, so we can visit more frequently, given the short distance.



Upon arriving at Toyama Airport, Dr. Sano and his wife warmly welcomed us and personally drove us to our hotel. Later, we went out together to enjoy a delicious dinner at a restaurant. The meal was a traditional Japanese course, featuring various types of sushi, including sushi topped with white shrimp, a specialty of Toyama. We also enjoyed miso soup, soba, and kirimochi as dessert. To help ease our initial

nervousness, they gifted us with adorable sushi socks, which was a delightful gesture. Dr. Sano also gave a brief overview of the upcoming schedule. Throughout this experience, we could feel Dr. Sano's thoughtfulness and care, which made us even more excited for the rest of our time in Japan.



On the morning of the second day, we had the opportunity to visit Kanazawa, a nearby city of Toyama. After a 20-minute ride on the Shinkansen, we arrived in Kanazawa, which had a different atmosphere from Toyama, with its traditional charm and many sights to see. After arriving, we moved to a spot near the station where we experienced wearing yukata, a traditional Japanese garment. We enjoyed choosing beautiful-colored yukata, selecting hair accessories, and picking out bags, making it a delightful experience.



Afterwards, we took a cool taxi to go have lunch. We enjoyed delicious cold soba topped with tempura and hot soba with an egg on top, and the atmosphere of the restaurant was very pleasant.



After the meal, we browsed for souvenirs and made memories while enjoying matcha ice cream. We especially had a great time taking photos in the alleys with Kanazawa's beautiful traditional houses. After changing back into our regular clothes from the yukata, we looked around for souvenirs at Kanazawa Station and then took the Shinkansen back to Toyama.



Dinner took place at a lovely Italian restaurant. We had the opportunity to dine and chat with two graduate students from Okayama. We discussed interesting topics such as the similarities and differences between pediatric dentistry in Korea and Japan, treatment methods, research approaches, and the cultures of each region. Since it is rare to have a chance to speak with pediatric dentistry residents in Japan, We were very grateful for this occasion. Although we communicated in English and sometimes used translation apps, the language barrier didn't feel too significant, and the conversation was filled with laughter. Additionally, every course, from the pasta and seafood dishes to the steak and the parfait served as dessert, was incredibly delicious. We felt thankful to have enjoyed yet another unforgettable meal on the second day.



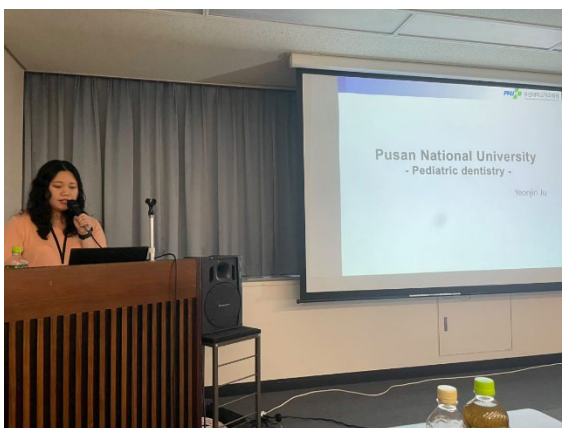
On the morning of the third day, we had a tour of Asunaro Dental Clinic. As soon as we opened the door to the clinic, we were greeted by loud music. Children were joyfully singing and dancing while learning about brushing their teeth. The clinic was decorated like a kingdom, and the staff welcomed patients in eye-catching costumes. Thanks to the unique interior that didn't resemble a typical clinic and the friendly staff, it seemed like patients could receive treatment without feeling scared.



After the tour of Asunaro Dental Clinic, we went out for sushi for lunch. The sushi topped with white shrimp, a specialty of Toyama, was particularly memorable. After lunch, we had tea time in Dr. Sano's office. Thanks to a talented and amazing piano player, we were able to have engaging conversations with the professors in a pleasant atmosphere.



In the afternoon, there were presentations introducing each participant's university from professors and residents who had come from various regions of Japan, followed by group discussions. We had the opportunity to learn about the different dental practices at various universities in Japan and to discover that interesting research activities were taking place on various topics. During the group discussion, we talked about the main problems in the current situation of pediatric dentistry, potential solutions, and ways for pediatric dentists in Korea and Japan to collaborate. It was a valuable time, allowing us to have interesting conversations with passionate and capable Japanese pediatric dentistry residents.



The last event of the third day was a gathering at an izakaya, where we had relaxed conversations with other residents and professors, and we bid farewell with the hope of meeting again in the future.





On the fourth day, we returned to Korea from Toyama. Although it was an early morning flight, thanks to Dr. Sano's kind consideration, we were able to return to Korea safely.



Through this trip, we were able to visit Asunaro Dental Clinic and learn about a unique pediatric dentistry practice, and it was a great experience that broadened our perspectives on Japanese culture. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Sano and the professors for providing us with this opportunity to visit. I also hope that there will be more active exchanges in the field of pediatric dentistry between Korea and Japan in the future.