

IOA Exchange Program at IWK Health Centre

First of all, I would like to thank Karen McMMain for her kindness. She organized the program at IWK Health Center that I was at and I had a wonderful experience there.

Through this program, in November 2007, I had the opportunity as a Japanese Orthoptist to observe work there for 3 weeks. I had wondered if there were differences between Japanese and Canadian ophthalmology clinics. To find this out was the main purpose of my visit there. IWK health center is a hospital for children in Nova Scotia. The patients going there have diseases such as strabismus and amblyopia. These are the two I studied during my stay at IWK.

Before I made this trip, I was anxious about conversing with the IWK Health Centre staff and patients due to my basic English. The staff tried to help my understanding even when they were busy. They were very helpful.

I have worked at a clinic in Japan for just 3 years so I am not well acquainted with the policies of many other Japanese clinics. However, as far as I know, in Japan when patients visit clinics, they have to move to each test. For example, after a vision test, a patient moves to another place for a different test. In IWK, the patients did not need to move. This makes them feel more relaxed.

I was very surprised that staff gives presentations once a week at IWK. The quality of the presentations is high. An IWK student is welcome to join them every week. It is a wonderful opportunity not only for current IWK students, but for future ones as well.

There are approximately 5000 Orthoptists in Japan, but unfortunately, the occupation is generally not a familiar one. Patients who visit the eye clinics wonder who we are. We usually tell them we will be performing tests on them, but we rarely tell them our occupation. However, I think we should introduce ourselves by occupation as the staff do at IWK. We might say "Hello! I'm (your name), your Orthoptist. Today we will check your..." These are simple words, but they will help people know us better in the future.

The staff at IWK warmly welcomed me and was really friendly. I hope there will be good relationships between Japanese Orthoptists and those in other countries.

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