

My story in a nutshell: chasing my dreams

Division of Oral Anatomy 2
Finsa Tisna Sari

My name is Finsa, a PhD student from Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Yogyakarta is a student city in Indonesia and it is located in the middle of Java Island, one of the big islands in Indonesia.

The journey led me to the Graduate School of Medical and Dental Sciences at Niigata University in 2021. My first encounter with Japan occurred when I attended a conference in Kobe. The research environment and lifestyle in Japan made me want

to pursue my studies in Japan.

Due to the pandemic situation, I had to wait for a while before finally moving to Niigata in early December. I was so excited because this was my first time living in a four-season country. However, I needed some time to get used to the academic and social environment, particularly during the winter. I am grateful to the teachers and friends who have supported me here.





I love Niigata's beauty, culture, and food. Niigata has its own beauty in every season. But the most favorite season for me is spring. I can see diverse varieties of stunning flowers that I haven't seen before. New hope arises with spring, which coincides with the appearance of new sprouts after a gloomy winter. During my holidays, I like to spend time exploring new places. It turns out that Niigata and Japan have numerous beautiful places, such as Takada, Ojiya, Tokamachi, Kyoto, Nara, Hakone, and many more.

In the division of oral anatomy 2, I am conducting research on orofacial development,

especially related to cellular aging known as senescence. I initially focused on senescence during my master's degree. I am inspired to learn more about senescence in developmental biology using the transgenic mouse. Now I can do things that in the past I could only read about in journals. This is something I have dreamed about in my life.

Even after two years here, there are still many things that I need to learn. I hope that the lessons I've learned will help me grow and become a better person, even though I know that life won't always be easy.

Living the dream: Niigata

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Vanessa Utama

My name is Vanessa Utama and I am from Indonesia. I was born and raised in Medan, in the North of Sumatra. I graduated from Padjadjaran University in 2013 with a degree in dentistry. In 2017, I attended the University of Indonesia to complete my Master's degree in Forensic Dentistry. A Japanese animation movie – Spirited Away, is one of my favorite movies of all time and as someone who has a dynamic personality and loves to explore places, I have always been fascinated by the beauty and rich culture Japan offers. However, I had never thought that one day I would have the opportunity to stay and live in Japan.

I am the only child in my family. My parents are both lecturers and they have always inspired me all my life. After I had finished my master's degree, I joined Trisakti University as a junior lecturer. From there, I was offered a position as a doctoral student at Niigata University. With a lot of advice and guidance from my professor at Trisakti University, I was awarded the MEXT International Scholarship. I was so happy and thrilled because I was living the dream.

I have always had a passion for dental age and development, so I went to Niigata University to study in the Department of Oral Anatomy. I am so grateful to have learned so much and also had the experi-

ence of working in a laboratory with various kinds of devices based on the latest technology at Niigata University thanks to the encouragement from Ohazama Sensei, and also the help I got from Maiko Sensei and Katsu Sensei in managing the challenges in my work project.

Apart from doing my studies as a second-year Ph.D. student, I do love being out traveling and exploring Japan. I enjoy the beautiful sightseeing, especially the old buildings, such as shrines, temples, palaces, and traditional Japanese houses. They have always captivated me greatly. I am



also very fond of Japanese cuisine, in particular the ramen noodles. As a ramen fan, Japan is definitely a country of ramen paradise for me, and I plan to taste each and every ramen noodle I can encounter in Niigata.

From where I come from – Indonesia, is an equatorial country where there are only 2 seasons; the dry season and the rainy season. It is therefore such a wonderful ex-

perience to be able to enjoy and live in a country with 4 seasons. The blooming of seasonal colorful flowers of spring, the fireworks and summer festivals, the red trees and leaves in fall, and also the freezing thick snow in winter, have been a marvelous experience for me. I never stop being eternally grateful for this wonderful opportunity and I will strive to grow as a better version of myself.

