

Where Cherish Blooms : A Memoir from Mandalay to Niigata

Division of Reconstructive Surgery for Oral and Maxillofacial Region
Myo Maung Maung

I am Myo Maung Maung, a PhD student from Myanmar currently enrolled in the Division of Reconstructive Surgery for Oral and Maxillofacial Region, Faculty of Dentistry, at Niigata University. My academic journey in dentistry began at the University of Dental Medicine, Mandalay, and brought me to Niigata, where I have been pursuing advanced studies with a focus on surgical orthodontic treatments.

Due to the pandemic period, there was an unexpected pause in my journey, making a delay on my arrival in Japan. Upon finally reaching, I initially expected that adapting to a new culture and environment would be challenging. However, thanks to the kindness and encouragement of my professor and teachers, I quickly found comfort and confidence in my new surroundings.

Over the past four years, Niigata University has become more than just a place of study - it has become a place of growth, discovery, and inspiration. The academic guidance and personal support I've received here have had a profound impact on my development. I'm especially grateful to be part of a department where mentorship and collaboration are highly valued.

Beyond academics, life in Niigata has been equally enriching. The city's calm and

uncrowded atmosphere, combined with its beautiful four-season scenery - from peaceful, snow-covered winters to vibrant springs and colorful autumns - has provided an ideal environment for focused study and personal reflection.

I am profoundly grateful to my teachers and friends of Niigata University for such a transformative and cherished experience ; thank you for everything.

My heartfelt thanks go to my teachers, colleagues, and friends for making this chapter of my life so memorable.



At Universal Studio Osaka, Japan

Japan : A trip that transformed my life

Division of Preventive Dentistry
Olenka Yomira VALENZUELA TORRES

Welcome to Niigata!

Being here marks an important step in your life and I sincerely want to congratulate you on all the effort and dedication you've put into making it this far.

My name is Olenka and I am from Peru — a beautiful country located on the other side of the world in South America. Peru is known for its incredible biodiversity, ancient cultural heritage, and world-renowned cuisine. If you ever get the chance, I encourage you to visit!

Japan was the first foreign country I ever visited, and now it's the place I call home. When I arrived, everything was completely new to me — the culture, the language, the customs — but it was also incredibly exciting. I discovered that each season in Ja-

pan brings unique experiences, and there's always something new to enjoy. It's a country full of surprises waiting to be discovered.

My life as a graduate student in Niigata has been both unique and transformative. I'm very grateful for this opportunity. I've learned so much and grown not only as a professional but also as a person. Like many of you, I was scared at first. I worried about whether I could adapt to this new lifestyle and whether my knowledge would be enough to face academic challenges. I knew I would miss my country and my family. I had to learn to manage my time, adapt to a new educational system, and find my own rhythm. Luckily, I met people who supported me along the way. My professor and



Friends from around the world in Niigata.
I'm the fifth person from the right in the bottom row.

supervisors have guided me from the start and continue to do so. Their suggestions and feedback have helped me see new perspectives, improve my projects, and grow.

This experience has allowed me to connect with people from all over the world. I've had the chance to travel both within and outside Japan to present my research — in cities like Tokyo and even in countries like Thailand. I never imagined I'd have the chance to share my work with professionals from around the globe.

A major challenge for me was the language barrier, as Spanish is my native language. Thanks to constant practice, I even won first place for best scientific research presentation at a conference — my first presentation during my PhD! However, Japanese has been my biggest language challenge. When I arrived, I couldn't understand or express myself at all. There were times when I felt very discouraged because

I didn't see much progress, and others seemed to learn it so quickly. But through classes, workshops, and a lot of daily practice, I've slowly improved. Now, I can understand basic conversations and express myself better. I'm still learning, but I'm proud of how far I've come.

Living in Japan — especially in Niigata — has opened my eyes to a whole new world. I've grown more than I ever imagined, and I'm deeply thankful for every step of this journey. I'm about to begin my third year, and looking back, I feel emotional seeing all that I've achieved.

To all of you, new international students : I wish you the very best in this new chapter of your lives. Don't be afraid of the unknown — every difficulty is a chance to grow. Give your best, enjoy every moment, and embrace the experience fully.

Welcome!



Workshop on Clinical Research Methods- Khon Kaen, Thailand.
I'm the first person from the left in the bottom row.