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# USNH Yokosuka's Interns Serve Fleet, Strengthen Host Nation Relations

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By Tim Jensen, U.S. Naval Hospital, Yokosuka

YOKOSUKA, Japan (NNS) -- U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka sponsors an annual internship program offering six licensed Japanese physicians the opportunity to work side-by-side with Navy Medicine professionals in a Westernized medicine environment.

The six interns are half way through their yearlong internship at USNH Yokosuka where they see patients in addition to assisting the referral management office by transferring patients who need specialty care available at local Japanese hospitals.

With the care overseen by Japanese interns service members can get back to their families and commands faster to complete their mission.

The intern program formally known as Japanese National Physician Graduate Medical Education Program was originally founded by USNH Yokosuka in 1952 to provide Japanese physicians an opportunity to learn Western medicine. Currently the program still provides this opportunity but has grown into well-known program within the Japanese medical community for providing opportunities to Japanese doctors seeking careers in America and also beneficial to the hospital by strengthening its relationship with its Japanese host nation.

Lt. Jeffrey Levine, the executive director of the program, stresses the significant role the interns play at the hospital.

"The intern program is important for me as a medical professional because having the opportunity to teach allows us to maintain an academic environment, said Levine." "We learn just as much by teaching the interns as they learn from us when we teach them."

In addition to learning on both sides, the Japanese interns assist in the cooperation between the Japanese and American medical systems.

"The interns are a cultural bridge, we teach them the American approach to medicine, and in turn they teach us about the Japanese health care system and Japanese culture, said Levine."

Dr. Taichi Imamura, this year's chief intern, works directly with Lt. Levine to guide the program in addition to his duties as a doctor. He recalls a time in the emergency room when his skills as a Japanese medical professional working at an American hospital came to the rescue of one U.S. service member after a car accident.

"I was the first person at the hospital to see him, said Imamura." "I met the Japanese emergency medical technicians and collected information which I translated into English for our emergency room staff while he was being admitted.

Imamura played a role as an ambassador between American and Japan which ensured that the patient got the best care possible in a swift manner.

Dr. Sae Morita knows the importance this program has on the relationship between the two nations. "Thanks to this program and hospital, Japanese and USNH Yokosuka medical providers are able to communicate more effectively and easily with each other, said Morita."

According to Morita, earlier year she presented a case to medical facility in Hokkaido, a northern part of Japan that included a detailed account of a patient's history so Japanese medical professions could see first-hand the U.S. medical standard practices. This was one of the ways Morita has showcased USNH Yokosuka's day to day operations if the two hospitals need to work together.

The Japanese interns stationed at USNH Yokosuka are the first medical professionals the hospital turns to when negotiating care with the local Japanese hospitals. The care the Japanese interns provide looks after the service members and their families in the Fleet Activities Yokosuka community.

For more news from U.S. Naval Hospital, Yokosuka, visit [www.navy.mil/local/nhyoko/](http://www.navy.mil/local/nhyoko/).



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130815-N-QK202-017 YOKOSUKA, Japan (Aug. 15, 2013) Dr. Hitomi Hosoya, one of six physicians in U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka's Japanese National Physician Graduate Medical Education Program speaks with Lt. Jeffrey Levine, internal medicine physician, about a patient. Hosoya plans to specialize in internal medicine after completing the program next year. U.S. Naval Hospital, Yokosuka, is the largest U.S. military treatment facility on mainland Japan caring for approximately 43,000 eligible beneficiaries. (U.S. Navy photo by Tim Jensen/Released)

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