

Dr. KASHO Kazutoshi

My research

To maintain healthy life activity, it is necessary to maintain the function of mitochondria, i.e. organelles, which supply energy to the cells. Mitochondria has its own genome (mtDNA) encoding the enzymes essential for energy production, and thus its copy number and quality must be maintained. My research in Dr. Sjoerd Wanrooij's group explores how human cells maintain the mtDNA copy number and genetic information.

Advice on preparing to go abroad

With regard to preparing for an overseas research stay what takes most time is applying for a visa. In my case, as I was already employed in a postdoc position at the time I started my overseas stay under the Overseas Research Fellowship, my coordination with the host institution went smoothly. However, acquiring my visa took considerable time. First, I had to apply to the Swedish Migration Agency for permission to acquire a visa. This process took close to a month and a half. The application documents for the visa included some to be prepared by the host institution. So, I needed to submit a plan and application to the institution early enough to coincide with the start of my stay. As I was also applying for a visa for my wife who would accompany me, the process took even more time as I had to get and add our Japanese marriage documents. Regarding my place of residence during the stay, the administration office of my host institution prepared a one-room apartment for us, so I didn't have to do any preparation myself.

Advice on problems that may arise when living abroad

One of the first things I needed to do when arriving in Sweden was to obtain a "personal number." As this number is necessary to lead one's daily life in Sweden, such as setting up a bank account, I went about applying for it right away. It took a lot of time for the government office to process my application and many hurdles arose. First, I had to obtain a residence permit card from the Migration Agency. Then, I had to apply to the Tax Agency for an ID card with my personal number entered on it. Finally, it took more than two months to be issued the card. To others, I would advise you not to expect the kind of quick processing that you are accustomed to in Japan. Another complication I encounter is that Swedish workers take one or two coffee breaks (called *fika*) during the working day. They also save up several weeks of leave time and take long vacations. Whereas these are nice

customs, they frequently impede the conducting of research and administrative processing. One must always bear in mind that researchers here conduct their research based on their own agendas without much concern for their surroundings.

What is it like living abroad?

Umeå is a city that boasts a beautiful natural environment and good public safety. I can say with certainty that it is an ultimate place to live for a family with children. The rental price of a room for a family with children is not that high. Transportation in town is convenient; buses accommodate baby carriages. Many people are kind to a family with children, and will be helpful if needed. While in Sweden, my wife gave birth. While we bore the burden of child raising, we were blessed with friends in Umeå's Japanese community. They provided helpful advice on daily living and childcare in Sweden. My wife is taking a free class for immigrants on Swedish language study, which is helping us in our daily life. As Umeå is located close to the Arctic Circle, you can walk and enjoy sunshine all day during the summer, while you can enjoy aurora hunting, skiing and other fun activities in the winter. During the coldest period of winter, you can enjoy indoor activities such as sports gyms or use well-equipped indoor facilities to play with your children.

What is good about your receiving a Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad?

Due to the support I receive under the Overseas Research Fellowship, I am able to freely pursue my research plan. I am very thankful for the ability that the Fellowship provides to carry out my research activities while we raise our child. It has allowed me to challenge research fields that are different than those I was pursuing in Japan. By doing my research in an environment different from that in Japan, I have been able to expand my horizons as a researcher. I am sure that experiencing new areas of research and technology and forming networks with researchers of diverse fields while here will be a key to advancing my future research and building my career.