



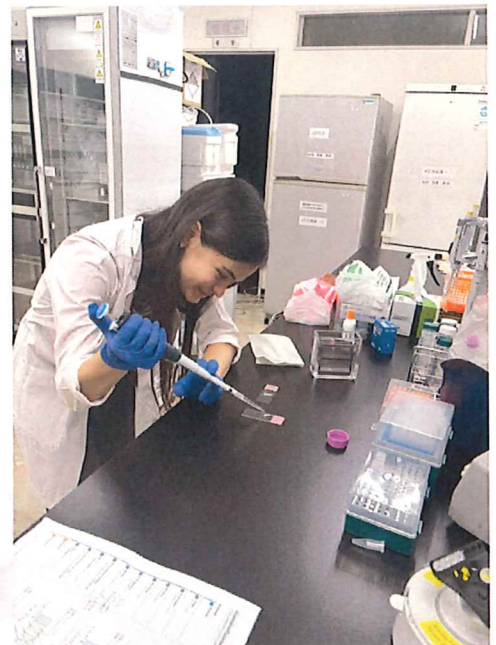
Dear Prof. Shima,
Dear beloved laboratory team,

There are no words to express my thankfulness for the month that I spent in your laboratory.

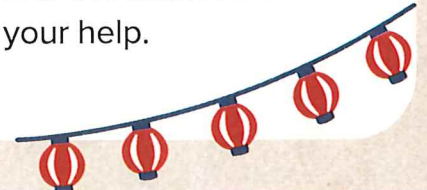
During my 4 years of medical studies, I never had the opportunity to do real laboratory work. *I could not possibly have wished for a better place to begin my research experience than here.* Learning from all of you showed me that laboratory work and basic research are not what I had always imagined, and you actually made me reconsider my choice of pursuing a career after my medical graduation.

Besides all the knowledge and experience, you have the most valuable quality — patience. Everyone was so kind and understanding and helped me a lot throughout my way of learning and improving my skills.

Just a month ago, I had no idea what I was going to do or if I would be able to do everything that I was supposed to do. And now I have just presented my whole work, which apparently was a lot.



You all made sure not only that I felt comfortable working in the laboratory, helping me even with the smallest inconvenience, but also that I felt included in your team. And I truly felt like that. You all showed genuine enthusiasm to learn more about me and about Bulgaria, which made me feel really special. Showing me parts of your culture and food, giving me advice about what to do in all the places that I have seen in Japan, made my whole experience a lot more special. I truly appreciate everything you did for me, because I can't imagine what this month would have looked like without your help.





Especially for Dr. Takahashi:

Thank you for being by my side at every step of my research. For repeating the same things until I finally understood what I had to do and correcting all the mistakes that I made. Your patience is something that I never imagined, but it is the one thing that I cannot appreciate enough. Even when we didn't understand each other, you still tried everything, and maybe this is what I find so special. I really hope I didn't interfere with your own work and that you also had as much fun as I did working together.

Getting a place for an exchange in Japan was not easy at all. I had my doubts for several months, and just before coming here, I was terrified. I needed to leave my home and be thousands of kilometers away, in a foreign country, with no one by my side, not having any idea what I would do. And here I am now — really sad that I have to go, sad that tomorrow is a free day and I don't have to come to work. I really had the opportunity to grow both personality and professionally, developing skills that no one else have taught me yet.



何から何まで、本当にありがとうございました。
またお会いする時まで!

This month, you and the whole of Japan will have a really special place in my heart, and I will go back to these memories over and over again.

I hope I will have the opportunity to meet you all again. And if you ever come to Bulgaria, or even somewhere nearby, I would be more than happy to show you what my country looks like and to try to make you feel as special as you made me feel here.

With a lot of gratitude and
thankfulness, *Toni*

August 2026