

EDITORIAL

Meguro Parasitological Museum – A Wonderful Experience Full of Surprises

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Received: 3 November 2023

Accepted: 15 December 2023

Published: 31 January 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51200/bjms.v18i1.4857>

Keywords: *Meguro, Parasitological,
Museum, Specimen*

In November 2023, one of us had the opportunity to visit the Meguro Parasitological Museum in Tokyo, Japan. The museum started its journey in 1953 with private funding from Dr Satoru Kamgeai. Now, the museum is a 70-year-old private research facility with its researchers who not only collect parasites of various animals for studies on morphology, taxonomy, distribution of parasites, etc. but also give presentations at academic meetings and publish articles in academic journals.

The museum collects and preserves about 60,000 parasite specimens (including 1,500 types). Of these, about 300 parasite specimens and related materials are exhibited in the museum, including several rare species. Medical students would certainly benefit from visiting the museum because previously, they could only study these species in medical textbooks, but now, they could see them physically. The display is divided into two categories: (i) "Diversity of Parasites", showing various types of parasite specimens with accompanying educational movies and (ii) "Human and Zoonotic Parasites", showing the life cycles of parasites and the symptoms they cause during human infection. The museum also houses 50,000 papers and 6,000 books on parasitology and parasitic diseases. In addition to research, the museum also provides educational activities and special publications. The museum offers work-study programmes and lectures and sells prepared parasite specimens for educational purposes.

There are many impressive things about the museum, including its free admission to visitors. The museum is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, to give the opportunity for family visits with children during weekends. Unlike many other museums, taking photos is fully allowed. During the visit, the museum was full of visitors and everyone was taking photos, encouraging knowledge dissemination.

Between 1950 and 1980, Japan eliminated several major parasitic diseases (Kasai et al., 2007). Japan has achieved significant improvements in the control and prevention of parasitic infections through a school-based approach since the 1930s (Horikoshi et al., 2021). Moreover, other basic public health measures such as increased toilet use, access to clean water and avoiding the use of human excrement as agricultural fertilizer, are equally important for the control and prevention of parasitic diseases (Horikoshi et al., 2021). Countries where parasitic infections are prevalent might benefit from following these procedures. In Malaysia, several parasitic infections are prevalent (Ahmed et al., 2011; Eichenberger et al., 2020; Chuah et al., 2019; Azira et al., 2013), which need to be addressed properly and efficiently. Institutional participation and community engagement for the control of parasitic infections are vital and a parasitology museum could enrich education and awareness. Due to its distinct location among the Malaysian states, Sabah needs to address the burden of parasitic infections in the region. One of the ways is to step forward to establish a parasitology museum, addressing related issues and helping to control parasitic infections.

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