

Japan Young Investigator Exchange Program (YIEP) 2023-2024

Domenico Sirico

Introduction

My name is Domenico Sirico, and I am an Interventional Cardiologist specializing in Pediatric Cardiology and Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD). My interest in pediatric cardiology began during my academic years at Hospital Niguarda in Milan, Italy, and deepened through clinical and interventional fellowships at the Royal Brompton Hospital in London (UK) and the University Hospital of Padua in Italy. These experiences solidified my passion for pediatric cardiology and inspired me to seek international opportunities to enhance my skills and knowledge.

Reason for Applying

The Young Investigator Exchange Program (YIEP) offered by the AEPC provided a unique opportunity to immerse myself in a different healthcare system, collaborate with leading experts, and gain hands-on experience in pediatric cardiology in Japan. The prospect of learning from distinguished mentors and exchanging knowledge with professionals from diverse backgrounds was a significant draw. My commitment to advancing research and improving patient outcomes in pediatric cardiology further fueled my desire to participate in this program.

Application Tips

When applying to the Young Investigator Exchange Program, emphasize how your enthusiasm for the field and your long-term career goals align with the program's offerings. Selection committees look for genuine passion, so highlight specific areas that pique your curiosity or drive your research interests.

It's also essential to showcase a track record of involvement in professional societies or working groups, as well as any notable research or leadership roles. For instance, my service as a junior councilor in the AEPC Interventional Working Group—helping organize two fellows courses and contributing to webinars—significantly strengthened my application. These experiences demonstrate your dedication, collaborative skills, and willingness to contribute, all of which are crucial for success in YIEP.

Lastly, outline how you plan to leverage the YIEP experience for professional growth. Show that you have a clear strategy for developing your skills, seeking mentorship, and undertaking future projects. Demonstrating a well-defined vision for how this opportunity will bolster your career can give your application a competitive edge.

Center Selection

Although the AEPC ultimately determines each participant's host center, they do take individual preferences into account. In my case, Shizuoka Children's Hospital was selected due to its renowned pediatric cardiology division and the invaluable opportunity to learn from esteemed professionals.

Practical Details

I stayed in a nearby facility arranged by the hospital, offering a short commute and a supportive living environment. Logistics, including travel and documentation, were streamlined through the assistance of Noriko, the pediatric cardiology secretary. She was extremely helpful, guiding me with day-to-day tasks—from grocery shopping to exploring the city.

Daily Experience

Each day, I participated in clinical rounds, attended outpatient clinics, spent time in the Cath lab, and joined multidisciplinary discussions. My primary objective was to expand my interventional cardiology skills, focusing on innovative techniques for treating congenital heart diseases. Dr. Sung-Hae Kim, the Cath Lab lead, was exceptionally supportive and attentive, while Dr. Tanaka (cardiology lead) and Dr. Yashimoto (EP lead), along with the entire team of fellows, made me feel welcome and at ease. This collaborative environment fostered an open exchange of ideas and deepened my understanding of diverse patient care strategies.

Impact

This experience was transformative, broadening my perspective on pediatric cardiology and inspiring new research directions. It also reinforced the critical importance of global collaboration in advancing medical care and research. The hospitality of the Japanese people was truly remarkable, and I appreciated the chance to immerse myself in their rich culture. For future applicants, I encourage fully embracing cultural opportunities, actively engaging with local professionals, and remaining open to learning from every interaction. The knowledge and relationships I gained will undoubtedly shape my future contributions to pediatric cardiology.