Mochitsuki (Mochi Pounding)

~An International Student Exchange Event Between Juntendo University and Tokyo Medical and Dental University~

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Juntendo University international students, faculty and staff participated in the Mochitsuki (Mochi pounding) event 2015, hosted by Tokyo Medical and Dental University on February 10th, 2015 from 11:00-12:00. Mochi is Japanese rice cake and a necessary food at important ceremonial occasions in Japan. Mochi rice is steamed, pounded into paste, and made into various shapes. Pounding Mochi is called Mochitsuki. Even though Japanese these days do not eat Mochi as often as they used to, Mochi is an indispensable traditional food for New Year in Japan. These days Japanese do not pound Mochi at home. However, Mochitsuki is a common event in local gatherings, schools, offices, etc.

Nineteen international students and 12 faculty and staff of Juntendo University, including Prof. Eiki Kominami, President, Prof. Hajime Arai, Dean of the Medical School, and 79 international students and 25 faculty and staff of Tokyo Medical and Dental University participated in the Mochitsuki event. At the beginning of the event, Prof. Junji Tagami, Vice president of Tokyo Medical and Dental University gave an opening speech, followed by a speech from Prof. Eiki Kominami, President of Juntendo University. Second, Associate Prof. Yoko Okita, International Exchange Center, Tokyo Medical and Dental University explained about Mochitsuki, covering cultural aspects of Mochi in Japan, utensils for Mochitsuki, such as Usu (traditional mortar) and Kine (wooden mallet), how to prepare Mochi, and a similar food, Fufu in the Congo. Third, Prof. Junji Tagami and Prof. Eiki Kominami pounded Mochi together. Forth, international students of the two universities pounded Mochi one by one. Finally, the participants ate four kinds of Mochi, Ankomochi (Mochi with sweet red bean paste), Kinakomochi (Mochi with sweet roasted soybean flour), Isobemochi (Mochi with Nori (seaweed), sugar, and soy sauce) and Karamimochi. (Mochi with smashed radish, red pepper, and soy sauce). All participants enjoyed pounding and tasting Mochi. It was a good experience for international students to experience a traditional Japanese cultural event.

Since 2012, Juntendo University and Tokyo Medical and Dental University hold 4 international student exchange events a year in order to promote understanding of Japanese culture and friendship of international students between the two universities.

Key words: mochitsuki, international students, Juntendo University, Tokyo Medical and Dental University

Figure-1 Group shot

Figure-2 Experiencing Mochitsuki