

From World to Kumamoto University

## Researching the Effects of the Secretory Molecule "Akhirin" Hoping to Support Medical Education Back Home

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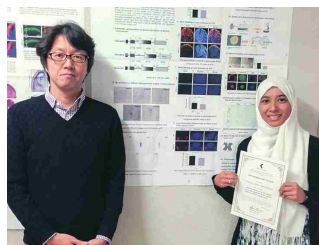
**Ms. Athary, who came from Saudi Arabia to Kumamoto in 2008, is a researcher of stem cell control mechanisms in the central nervous system.**

**From this spring she will become an instructor at her home university, and hopes to become involved in education in her home country.**

I have fascinated by insects and other small creatures from my childhood, and majored in biology at Umm Al-Qura University in Saudi Arabia. Hoping to deepen my learning of bio-phenomena, I entered Kumamoto University on the King Abdullah Scholarships Program.

My encounter with Kumamoto University came through Japan Education Fair for foreign students conducted by an assembled group of universities. The person in charge of the event understood the gist of my research, and quickly contacted the late Hideaki Tanaka, a professor in the field of nerve differentiation, on my behalf. Through subsequent exchanges of e-mail with Professor Tanaka I became interested in the mechanisms of nerves.

Under the guidance of Associate Professor Kunimasa Ohta, I am now researching control mechanisms in brain nerve stem cells and spinal cord nerve stem cells related to a secretory molecule called Akhirin. While enrolled, I was given the opportunity to participate in many academic conferences. This let me meet many researchers, acquire considerable knowledge, and gain valuable experiences.



**With Assistant Professor Ohta in front of the poster presented by Ms. Athary. "I am grateful to the teachers who respected and watched over my research," says Ms. Athary.**



**Observing thinly sliced and dyed Akhirin, present in the spinal cord of mice, through a microscope.**

I appreciate the richness of nature in Kumamoto, as well as the great food. Lately I really enjoy lotus root, which I came to like when one of the laboratory assistants made me delicious renkon kinpira (sauteed lotus root). My favorite spot in Kumamoto is Mt. Aso. The other day, I was able to view the volcanic crater of Mt. Aso from a helicopter. It was like looking into a bubbling stew, and was quite a thrill.

In March I will return to Saudi Arabia and become an instructor at my home university, Umm Al-Qura University. I treasure my meeting with my teachers and colleagues at Kumamoto University, and can't wait for the day when I can teach what I have learned to students in my country. Some day, I would like to return to Kumamoto University as an instructor.