

Amami Laboratory of Medical Science

奄美医科学研究施設

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The Amami Laboratory of Medical Science has a long history originating from the branch office of the Institute for Infectious Disease which was established in 1902. We have made great achievements in filariasis eradication from this island and prevention of Habu bites. Currently, we are maintaining the colonies of New World monkeys, and aiming to overcome endemic infectious diseases in the tropical and subtropical regions through infection experiments using primates.

Reproduction of squirrel monkeys and owl monkeys

Squirrel monkeys (*Saimiri boliviensis*) and Owl monkey (*Aotus lemurinus griseimembra*) are widely distributed in the tropical rainforest in Central and South America. The advantage of using both species for medical researches resides in its small size and gentle behavior. Squirrel monkeys and owl monkeys are phylogenetically close to each other, and both are well known as the best candidates for malaria model in primates. In our laboratory, squirrel monkeys have a breeding season between winter and early spring. They are polygamy. Their puberty is 3-4 years old in females and 4-5 years old in males. Their gestation period is about 150 days. In contrast, owl monkeys are annual breeding animals. They are monogamy. Their puberty is 3 years old for both sexes. Their gestation period is about 130 days. Five newborns were given in reproductive groups of squirrel monkeys in 2024. On the other hand, owl monkeys have become male-only colonies, and breeding has stopped at present.

Research using non-human primates

Notable aspect of our laboratory is the unique International Joint Usage and Research Center capabili-

ty of conducting infection experiment using squirrel monkeys, owl monkeys, and cynomolgus monkeys. The 3rd building equipped with animal experimental rooms, which allows for experiments on mosquito-borne infectious diseases in primates was completed last year, and its use is started from this year. We are working with collaborators from several institutions to develop an experimental squirrel monkey infection model to assess the anti-malarial activity of new compounds and vaccines.

Research on the control of snakebite envenoming

Snakebite envenoming is still a serious health problem in many tropical and subtropical countries. It was recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a neglected tropical disease in 2009, and was elevated into Category A of the Neglected Tropical Diseases list in 2017. Amami laboratory used to be an important facility for research and development of antivenom serum for Habu (*Protobothrops flavoviridis*), which is a species endemic to Japan. We are conducting research with collaborators aimed to elucidate the detail components of Habu venom through genome analysis, etc. and that will contribute to control of snakebite envenoming in the world.