

Website Article

Upon leaving school, I embarked on an undergraduate degree in sports science as well as an MSc in sports biomechanics at Liverpool John Moores University. This led to opportunities working at the International Tennis Federation's research laboratory as well as the Lawn Tennis Association in London. I worked in their respective technical and sport performance departments, on a variety of projects related to in-house product validation and testing, as well as injury prevention projects in combination with Loughborough University. This gave me extensive opportunities, to work with elite athletes in relation to injury prevention and sports performance.

2012 brought a slight change in direction, as I embarked on a degree in podiatric medicine. This allowed me to gain a thorough clinical knowledge base in all matters disease and their manifestations in the lower limb. Within the field of podiatry, I developed a particular interest in arthritis. I felt that the disease process coupled with the musculoskeletal changes in the lower limb most suited my previous background. About half way through my degree, I realised that I developed an interest in research. Upon gaining a first class degree in podiatry, I felt I wanted to gain a better understanding of observational research methodology and statistical analysis in the non-communicable diseases, with a focus in arthritis. I, therefore, embarked on an MSc in Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The MSc was a great step in gaining an excellent grounding in the various forms of observational research methodology needed for health care research.

Even though I was gaining all the technical aspects needed for research, I found myself lacking a network in terms of my interest in arthritis, and the foot and ankle. I decided that I needed to approach leaders in the field that could point me in the right direction. At the Annual College of Podiatry conference in Harrogate, in the autumn of 2015, I introduced myself to Prof. Bowen. After a brief discussion she suggested I email her. Little did I know, at the time, what opportunities would transpire from a 30-second introduction, followed by an introductory email. Soon after our initial conversation, I applied for the internship at the Arthritis Research UK Centre for Sport, Exercise and Osteoarthritis, and was successful in securing an internship.

The 2016 internship cycle recruited 5 interns. As part of the internship we, the interns, spent two days a week during the first three weeks taking part in site visits. We were able to travel to Leeds, Bath, UCL, Loughborough, Southampton, Oxford and Nottingham. The site visits were an excellent opportunity to see what research was undertaken at the different sites under the Centre's umbrella, but also a great way to network. For the eight-week internship, every intern was allocated a project within the Centre, as well as a supervisor and mentor. I had the opportunity to work with Prof Cathy Bowen and Dr Lucy Gates. I was assigned to an epidemiology project entitled 'Analysis of an existing large, 25 year, cohort data set towards the development of a foot and ankle database for international cohorts'. This project was a great opportunity to work on a real-life data set, which brought with it real life cohort data issues right from the start. It was a great opportunity to be able to

combine my epidemiology and podiatry knowledge to an area of research that is in its infancy.

At the end of the eight-week internship we had the opportunity to all get together in Nottingham for the dissemination day, held on the 12th August. It was our opportunity to present the various projects and findings we had been working on as well as share our experiences of our time spent with the Centre.

The internship exceeded my expectation. I had the opportunity to work with a great team. Prof. Bowen helped in opening numerous doors. She instigated a meeting with Dr Alan Borthwick, this meeting culminated in the opportunity to join the editorial board of the Journal of Foot and Ankle Research as a reviewer. Furthermore, I expressed an interest in joining one of the College of Podiatry's many directorates and subsequently was introduced to various members of the college to discuss opportunities within the organisation. The internship also helped me secure an academic position as well as continuing onto a PhD at the University of East London, which I will be taking up this September. Moving forward I will continue to work with Prof. Bowen as well as Dr Gates and be part of the 'International Foot and Ankle OA Networking Group'.

The internship has been a fantastic opportunity, which I would recommend to anyone interested in osteoarthritis research as well as seeking networking opportunities, with a vision to foster a career in research. I hope to return to the Centre in future to share my internship experiences with future interns as well as have the opportunity to act as a mentor on future projects. I am also hoping to give a lecture promoting the internship program's 2017 cycle within my department during the first term of my appointment at the University of East London.

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