

NIHR/BAD Research Taster Bursary Report

Anna Ascott - visiting the Fundacion de la Academia Espanola de Dermatologia y Venereologia in Madrid

Background and Aims:

I would like to thank the NIHR and the BAD for their generosity in awarding me the bursary. I am a final year medical student about to begin an academic foundation post. My MSc in Public Health and Management, and my experiences on subcommittees at the BAD have inspired my future career plans to combine clinical dermatology and dermato-epidemiology research to try and improve population health using research, data, and collaboration. I applied for this award to develop my exposure to the many applications of dermato-epidemiology.

Experience:

Whilst at the Fundacion I learnt about the process of data collection for disease registries BIOBADADERM (Spanish Registry of Systemic Therapy in Psoriasis) and REGESMOHS (Spanish Registry of Mohs Surgery). I practiced using the online platform that clinicians use to input data, and learnt about the quality control process to ensure internal validity of the data. I reflected upon on how to design the data collection methods to put minimum pressure on physicians who give up their time to enter patients, but to also ensure high quality data that can continue to answer important and relevant research questions. I had meetings to discuss brand new registries for lymphoma, and haemangiomas, which helped me to appreciate the design considerations, challenges and applications of registry cohort studies at different stages of creation. By reviewing manuscripts of research papers utilising data from BIOBADADERM and REGESMOHS I delved into the registries' application to research questions, and developed my critical appraisal and peer-review skills. This experience illuminated the challenges of using specially collected data, in contrast to the challenges of using routinely collected health data, which were more familiar to me.

I gave critical revisions on a bibliometric study investigating academic life in Spain, exploring attributes of academically productive clinical departments. It was interesting to compare the healthcare systems, workforce issues, and the research landscape in Spain to that of the UK. It was also my first introduction to bibliometric studies, which I have discovered are feasible study types for junior doctors who want to fit research around their clinical day job.

I gave design suggestions and wrote a draft paper for a new multinational pharmacovigilance project related to PSONET (European Surveillance Network to Monitor Long Term Effectiveness and Safety of Systemic Agents for Psoriasis). This project aims to triangulate specially collected data with routinely collected pharmacovigilance data. Dermatology is a small specialty with rare diseases, which makes research collaboration imperative in order to produce high quality research that benefits patients.

Whilst in Madrid I attended an epidemiology course, and the first European Dermatoepidemiology Network (EDEN) Forum. Here I met dermatoepidemiology researchers from all over the world, and joined in collaborative discussion on the projects being presented.

Madrid is a wonderful city to visit, and I spent the evenings taking in the sights. Researchers at the Fundacion made me feel extremely welcome with recommendations of what to see, and lunch at a local Spanish eatery for authentic Spanish omelette and croquetas.

Understanding different research environments is an essential skill for me as I hope to collaborate with researchers in different countries and fields in order to increase efficiency, replicate findings in different settings, and produce high quality research in Dermatology. I have been inspired to investigate new clinical questions and hope to collaborate with the researchers at the Fundacion in the near future.