

Internships at NCDA: two interns share their experiences

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One of the highlights of Intern Anna Van der Linden was live-tweeting a High-Level Political Forum side-event from within UN Head Quarters © Anna Van der Linden

Last summer, the NCD Alliance benefitted from the collaboration of two interns, Mounika Parimi in the London office and Anna Van der Linden in the New York office. Both Mounika and Anna already had a long-time interest in global health and development, so welcomed the experience with NCDA. Here, they share their reflections on the things they learned and the benefits of the experience.

Lessons learned in the global health field

Mounika and Anna were involved in different fields at NCDA, but gained many of the same lessons through their experiences. Mounika was an intern with the capacity development team, with tasks focused on the NCDA initiative [Our Views Our Voices](#) [1], an exercise committed to understanding and highlighting the voices of people living with NCDs globally. Anna interned in communications, focusing her efforts on the NCDA website during its transition to becoming tri-lingual. She also assisted with the NCDA Twitter account, to spread awareness about global health days recognised each year.

They both worked with NCDA team members around the world. As Mounika commented, “It was interesting to see the connection between the global team located in several countries around the world, made easy and possible through technology.”

Both also experienced the importance of being proactive, self-motivated and committed to working in the field of global health. Anna recounted, “Much of my work was not in an office setting, so it was important to stay focused and motivated while working through assignments. Being self-sufficient and proactive when you face confusion is helpful to getting things done quickly, especially when your contacts may not be able to answer your questions right away due to time differences.”

Similarly, Mounika said, “Discipline is necessary as most of the time, you are trusted to perform your tasks without constant inspection. It can also be easy to feel discouraged in this field, therefore, commitment to the cause is extremely important.”

Favourite moments and reflections

With their differing areas of focus, each of the interns had their own most valued experiences. For Mounika, it was being involved in the Our Views Our Voices project, which allowed her to read and analyse conversations among various communities around the world, discussing the challenges, discrimination and day-to-day lives of people living with and affected by NCDs. “Reading about their tangible experiences was transformative and shed light on the lives of real people who are impacted by policy and healthcare issues that they often have no say in. I was humbled by their insights,” she said.

In Anna’s case, it was getting the chance to tweet during a side event of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. “I was excited to see the UN Headquarters and I was impressed with the speakers’ messages, particularly the extensive knowledge and drive of Luis Manuel Encarnación Cruz of Coalition Mexico Salud-hable.”

Plans for the future

Mounika and Anna plan to continue their work in the field of global health. As Mounika explains, “Global health challenges me to look at the world not from my comfort zone, but through other points of view from cultures around the world. It challenges me not only as a scientific being but also engages me as a human being, demanding empathy, solidarity and humility.” For Anna, global health appeals to her conscience and her desire to work with others around the globe with the aim to create a better world. “The field stuck out to me as a community that bridges people from such different places and creates conversations that wouldn’t occur in any other area. A position that is so connected to others on an international level is incredibly appealing to me.”

Work and studies since the NCDA

Since their collaboration with NCDA, Mounika and Anna have gone on to pursue health careers. Mounika is currently working as a junior epidemiologist at IQVIA (a human data science consultancy) in London, honing her scientific and technical skills. She works in the Real World Evidence Solutions team focusing on designing and analyzing real-world observational studies. Anna is pursuing a psychology degree, with a focus on child development. Professionally, she is exploring both psychology research opportunities and advocacy work.

In the summer of 2018, Luis Manuel Encarnación Cruz is undertaking an internship with NCDA as part of his studies at the London School of Economics, where he is working on a policy framework analysis on obesity prevention policies in Latin America. We look forward to sharing Luis’ reflections in coming months.

About Mounika and Anna

Mounika Parimi holds a Bachelors degree in music and biology from the University of Redlands in California. Mounika has conducted research into Type 1 diabetes in California and Dresden, Germany as a Fulbright scholar. She recently completed her MSc in public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine as a Rotary Global Scholar.

Anna Van der Linden attends Amherst College in western Massachusetts, and is currently working on social media with a San Francisco-based diabetes non-profit, The diaTribe Foundation. She plans to major in psychology and continue to pursue communications in the field of global health.

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