

Global Challenge Internship Programme

Rebekah Coates
MSci Psychology

Chirpy Dragon Project, Centre for Disease Control, Guangzhou City, China

Research Assistant



Overview of the Internship

The Chirpy Dragon project runs behavioural interventions in Guangzhou schools, promoting healthy eating and exercise for children. My main task was a systematic literature review, researching interventions for childhood obesity aimed at children aged between 0 and 6 years old. This involved writing a search strategy for the different databases and then extracting the abstracts from each database for the studies that were found. After this, I read the 2,500 abstracts found to see whether they were suitable to be included in the final systematic review. I wrote up a report on the search strategy I used to be included in the final paper written by Dr Li (the project lead) and her colleagues.

Main Achievements

One of my main achievements the fact I was able to adapt and learn how to use computer programmes and databases different than what I was expecting or have previously used to complete my task. I was unable to access many websites and databases that I usually use in the UK for research because of the restrictions on China's internet use. This meant learning new programmes to complete the task, which I did to the best of my ability. The systematic review task set was quite substantial, so I am proud that I completed the task in the time frame given, alongside all of the extra challenges I

encountered whilst completing it, such as using new databases. I also developed my skills in data cleansing, on a larger scale than I have previously done, which is a useful achievement I can use in the future for my intended career path.

Most enjoyable part of the internship

I enjoyed learning about research in a new context and culture. Within psychology, we are always warned of not using biased research that has only come from one place to support arguments that discuss the wider population, but as most research is conducted within Western cultures it can be difficult to avoid such research. Being able to see the differences in research and results from a new culture developed my knowledge of the subject, and research in general.

The people I worked with were also a great part of my internship, as they were really helpful and kind, helping us to settle into an unfamiliar culture where we didn't speak the language. They made the transition much easier for us by helping us to find new accommodation, translating for us and introducing to many aspects of the culture in Guangzhou, such as food and having a nap at work half way through the day.

Skills Developed

I learnt many skills during my internship. I built upon skills I learnt during my degree and developed personally too.

My main task was to conduct the first stage of a systematic review. I have completed systematic reviews during my degree, but I felt able to utilise these skills and develop upon them during the internship. I also built upon my research skills in other areas, like data cleansing and analysis. I was able to apply many of the theoretical skills I have learnt during my degree to a practical, real research setting, developing my awareness of how to apply these skills to my future work.

I also believe I developed personally. I had to be resilient, independent and flexible, willing to adapt to a new situation and culture the best I could. I feel that I showed all of these attributes during my internship, enabling me to get the most benefit from my experience possible.

How the internship will help me in the future

As I pursue a career in clinical psychology, experience in research is essential to progressing on my career path. My experience on this project, has given me skills in data cleansing, analysis and writing a systematic review, all incredibly useful skills for working in a psychological setting. I also believe that having worked and lived in another has given me other skills to apply to applying for jobs in the UK. I have demonstrated transferable skills, such as communication skills, team working and problem solving. Having lived in another culture has given me a greater appreciation for cultural differences, which I will ensure to increase my awareness of whilst working with clients of various cultures in a psychological setting. Respecting the cultural background of all clients can improve rapport between client and clinician and is an important part of psychological work, and my experience from this internship will improve my work as a psychologist.