

(Abroad • Domestic) Internship report form (Student)

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Name	Heidi Lynn Tessmer
Laboratory	Division of Bioinformatics
Year (Grade)	2
Internship institution	WHO WPRO
Internship period	Internship period: 03/09/2015 - 03/10/2015 (Departure Date from Sapporo: 03/07/2015, Arrival Date in Sapporo:03/11/2015)
Purpose	WHO WPRO Visit

This report should be submitted within 2 weeks after you return to Japan.

- The reason why you chose this institute

As an international organization focused on improving public health worldwide, the WHO is an organization I am considering applying to for employment following graduation.

- Result of the activity (about 800 words、 provide photos, tables and figures that clearly show the activities during the period)

On Monday, March 9th and Tuesday, March 10th, I visited the Western Pacific Regional Office of the World Health Organization with a group from Hokkaido University. During this visit, we attended numerous meetings, met with several leaders within the organization, and learned a great deal about the work the World Health Organization does in this region, how the different regional offices work together, and the specific activities of the Division of Health Security and Emergencies (DSE) Emerging Disease Surveillance and Response (ESR) team.

Each morning, we arrived at the WHO WPR Office around 6:15AM, meeting with ESR members to observe their morning routine. This routine includes monitoring shared email accounts and scouring numerous public and private databases and websites containing news and reports of illness, disasters, and other activities around the world. During the second morning, we were given the opportunity to participate in this activity with Dr. Isoda, by using a number of their resources and his instruction, as a group we identified different risks to the region, their potential impacts, and then made a decision on whether they were 'reportable' or not. This practice of rapid risk analysis is an important part of the

ESR team's daily activities and a crucial skill for an intern or team member.

Next, we attended the 7:00AM and 8:30AM briefings. The 7:00AM brief is a point for everyone on the ESR team to discuss their findings from the previous day and that morning's reports. As there are so many sources of information, each person is responsible for a small portion of the reviews. During the 7AM meeting, each person shares what they have determined as potentially important with the team. At this point, the incidences are discussed and analyzed. Based on the perceived risk of each item and the responsible parties, the items are either marked to be reported at the 8:30AM briefing, passed to a separate responsible party (e.g. food poisoning, a natural disaster, and a zoonotic outbreak all have different responsible organizations), and for minor, known, or repetitive items, possibly dropped from the agenda. Between 7AM and 8:30AM, the members of the ESR team prepare slides as necessary to brief at the 8:30AM meeting. These slides include any important activities for the current day, as well as weekly reports and updates regarding ongoing issues. At 8:30AM, all members of the DSE teams meet to discuss new business, receive status updates, and obtain tasking from their leadership.

Following the 8:30AM meeting each morning, we had a variety of briefs explaining the workings of the WHO WPRO at different levels. We met with Dr. Kasai, Dr. Li, Dr. Lee, and Dr. Konings during our time at WPRO. Dr. Konings provided two briefings with respect to laboratories in the region. The first presentation exhibited the work WHO has conducted in bringing laboratory capabilities to the region, increasing capacity and improving reliability of the laboratories in place. Their work also focuses on building networks between nations to ensure full coverage and ability to identify emerging diseases quickly and efficiently. Dr. Konings second presentation focused on External Quality Assessments (EQAs), which are tests that can be conducted in a laboratory to identify shortcomings in laboratory capability, accuracy, and efficiency. These assessments are an excellent method of ensuring laboratories maintain a high level of quality in their practices and procedures.

Additionally, we had an opportunity to review a risk assessment document which

has not yet been published. During this review, we discussed numerous topics: the document, as written, the overall risk of the disease, the target audience and their understanding of the topics being discussed, and many other aspects of the risk review process. This gave us a first-hand view of the activities of the WHO, while underscoring the need to make information not only accessible to experts, but also to the whole world. The focus, therefore, was not only on the facts of the case, but what was truly important to the end-user – how to clearly explain the risks, symptoms, knowns, and unknowns in a way that would educate the reader without being either alarming or too pacifying (i.e. clearly explaining the known extent of the risk).

Overall, our visit to the WHO WPR Office was an excellent education in the activities of a world organization focused on the health and welfare of all individuals. We gained exciting and useful insight into the workings of a regional office, while also gaining an understanding of the risks and concerns they encounter daily.

- What do you think the positive impact of the activity will have on your further research, student life and career path?

My participation in this program has improved my understanding of the WHO, its work, and how it is run. This knowledge will assist me in selecting an institute for my internship, as well as providing valuable insight which will aid me in selecting my career path.

Regarding my research, there were several items which were discussed during the meetings I attended which bring up important and interesting questions in my research field. I plan to incorporate these questions into my current and future research, and hope to find their answers.

- Advice for your junior fellows

Speak up and participate. Ask questions, listen, and be sure to understand the answers. Learn actively.

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