

My UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH INTERNSHIP JOURNEY

2024-2025

By Adrianna Montgomery

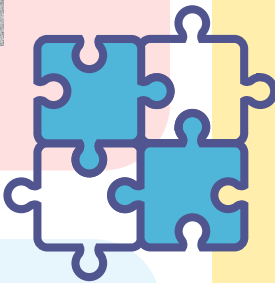
INTRODUCTION

The NIHR undergraduate research internship is an opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience in health and care research. It allows interns to work alongside experienced researchers, develop essential research skills, and contribute to meaningful projects that impact health and care outcomes over five weeks. The program is designed to enhance students' understanding of real-world research and inspire future careers in health and care and academia.

Personal Motivation for Applying: I applied for the NIHR research internship because of my strong interest in health and care research and my aspiration to contribute to evidence-based advancements in patient care. I wanted to gain practical research experience, improve my analytical skills, and explore potential career paths within the field of health and care research. The prospect of working with leading researchers and learning about cutting-edge methodologies was an exciting opportunity that I did not want to miss.



Presenting at the NIHR INSIGHT Yorkshire and Humber Event.
From left to right: Eleora Mansi, Adrianna Montgomery.



PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The NIHR undergraduate research internship provided numerous opportunities for professional development, fostering both collaborative experiences and personal growth.

- **Attending Conferences & Workshops:** Engaging in discussions with industry experts and researchers expanded my understanding of various healthcare topics and methodologies.
- **Learning from Experienced Mentors:** Working closely with established researchers allowed me to receive invaluable guidance, feedback, and career advice.
- **Engaging with Fellow Interns:** Collaborating with peers provided a supportive learning environment and encouraged knowledge-sharing, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- **Enhanced Critical Thinking:** Exposure to real-world healthcare research challenges sharpened my ability to analyse complex data and draw meaningful conclusions.

KEY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Throughout the internship, I developed a range of essential research skills and learned how to overcome challenges commonly encountered in research settings.

Research Skills Gained:

- **Conducting Literature Reviews:** I learned how to systematically search, evaluate, and synthesise academic research to support evidence-based findings.
- **Data Collection & Analysis:** Hands-on experience with both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including surveys, interviews, etc.
- **Understanding Research Methodologies:** Gained insights into different research designs, ethical considerations, and best practices for conducting rigorous studies.

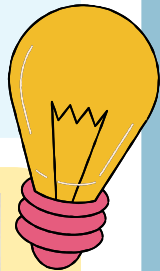
Overcoming Challenges:

- **Time Management:** Balancing internship responsibilities, academic commitments, and independent learning required effective planning and prioritisation.
- **Adapting to New Research Tools:** Learning to use data visualisation tools and reference management systems was challenging but rewarding.
- **Problem-Solving in a Research Environment:** Addressing unexpected challenges, such as incomplete datasets or methodological adjustments, helped enhance my critical thinking skills and resilience.



INITIAL EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY

- **Expectation:** Basic exposure to research methodologies and limited hands-on experience.
- **Reality:** Gained in-depth knowledge of research design, ethical considerations, and statistical analysis through active participation in projects.
- **Expectation:** Working independently with minimal supervision.
- **Reality:** Received strong mentorship and collaborative opportunities with professionals and fellow interns.
- **Expectation:** Research would be straightforward and primarily theoretical.
- **Reality:** Faced challenges in data collection and analysis, requiring problem-solving and adaptability.
- **Expectation:** Limited networking opportunities.
- **Reality:** Attended seminars and engaged with experts, expanding my professional network and career insights.



The research internship cohort and mentors met on the first day of the internship.
From left to right: Kirsty Haunch (mentor), Gemma Louch (mentor), Eleora Mansi, Ellie Little, Adrianna Montgomery, Reena Devi (mentor).

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Reflecting on my NIHR internship, I realise the significant impact this experience has had on my personal and professional growth. The skills, insights, and connections I have gained have reinforced my passion for healthcare research and provided a solid foundation for my future career.

Key Takeaways:

- **Influence on Career Aspirations:** This internship has strengthened my desire to pursue a career in healthcare research. The exposure to real-world studies and hands-on experience have deepened my understanding of the research process and its impact on patient care.
- **Future Plans in Healthcare Research:** I aim to further my research skills by pursuing a postgraduate degree in a related field. Additionally, I hope to engage in more research projects that focus on evidence-based healthcare improvements.
- **Long-Term Impact of the Internship:** The mentorship and professional network I have built during this internship will continue to support my career progression. The experience has provided me with the confidence to contribute to meaningful research.