

**Sara Mirali**  
**Rise professional 2015**

Short Summary

My RISE professional internship this summer was both a scientifically and culturally enriching experience. My coworkers and supervisors were all incredibly welcoming and I learned a lot about the scientific process in Germany. Outside of work, my favorite experience was reuniting with some old RISE friends that I met in Germany 2 years ago. Participating in RISE has greatly broadened my network of colleagues and has given me a new perspective on science.

Report

When I found out that I would be going back to Germany this past summer, I was beyond excited. My first experience with the DAAD was when I participated in the RISE program during the summer of 2013. As an undergraduate at McGill University, I was very involved in research and had always wanted to see what the scientific community and process was like in other countries. Germany was ideal, given that it is a scientific leader in Europe and I had heard great things about the DAAD. As a recent graduate, I had a growing interest in translational research and wanted to explore how science and industry collaborate with one another. My past experience with the RISE program as an undergraduate was amazing and I wanted to return to Germany because it had several companies that had an innovative approach to science and technology. I was matched to work on a joint project between the DPZ and Fraunhofer in Göttingen.

At the DPZ, I worked under Dr. Franziska Dahlmann in the Infectious Pathology unit. We worked in close collaboration with other departments within the DPZ and with Fraunhofer ITEM, which was based in Hannover. On the first day of my internship, my tasks were made clear and a suggested timeline was provided. I found this incredibly helpful in organizing my tasks and scheduling my time. On most days, I started work at 8:30 a.m. and left at 4:30 p.m., but this varied depending on which experiments were scheduled. My coworkers taught me all the new techniques that I needed to know and were always available to help. My time at the DPZ was fantastic, largely because of who I worked with. Everybody, whether they were in my department or not, was incredibly patient, resourceful, kind, and helpful. This made for a great learning environment and I never hesitated asking questions.

One of the major goals of our research was further characterizing the common marmoset as a model for studying respiratory pathologies. This required close collaboration between veterinarians, scientists, animal care workers and technicians. I always found large lab meetings to be very interesting as several viewpoints would be represented. I learned a great deal about the level of coordination that is required in a multi-disciplinary team and the benefits of working within one.

I lived in Göttingen, a charming university city with a young and international student population. I arrived alone but I found it very easy to meet and befriend people. The student community was fantastic-there was a large variety of clubs and several student-run events throughout the week. It was easy to travel on the weekends and I managed to visit several cities within Germany throughout the summer. Coming from Toronto, an expensive city, I was happily surprised at the low cost of living-rent, food, and transportation were much cheaper comparatively. Biking was the preferred method of transportation and I highly recommend buying one second-hand. Göttingen is very bike friendly with bike lanes throughout the city and ample parking.

This past summer was undoubtedly the best summer of my life thus far. Germany is fantastic and I found it very difficult to leave. It is a culturally rich country and every city has its own vibrant character. The people are patient if you don't speak German (although I highly encourage you to learn as much as you can) and very welcoming. I met people from all over the world and have gained so much perspective from both a cultural and scientific aspect. My coworkers were wonderful and the international contacts that I made throughout my internship are invaluable. I am already looking forward to visiting in the near future and I would gladly return for another internship. I want to thank the DAAD for giving me this incredible opportunity and I highly recommend the program to prospective applicants. I am currently pursuing a joint MD/PhD degree at the University of Toronto and I look forward to maintaining the ties I made within Germany as I go forward in my medical and scientific career.