



Science and Outcomes of Allergy and Asthma Research

September 2017 Newsletter



Left to right, Top Row: Sofia, Justin, Olivia
Bottom row: Avneet, Mary, and Alexandria

Exceeded Expectations

As anyone who has completed an internship knows, there is a moment before it begins when you wonder what the weeks and months ahead will be like. Questions such as, "Will this be a good experience?", "Will my supervisor have time for me?", and "Will I have the opportunity to contribute and add value to the team?" cross your mind. Internships serve as a formal program to give practical experience for those who are at the very beginning of their profession. For this year's SOAAR interns, the experience exceeded their expectations.

"Coming into the internship, I expected to have a good amount of work and responsibility dealt to me, all the while learning a lot. My experience did not disappoint. I got a first-hand view of the world of research and all that it entails. I helped out with different parts of studies from recruitment to the design of marketing material." – Sofia

*"I expected to learn a lot about food allergy and epidemiological research, however, I learned so much more. This internship exposed me to an array of different projects that challenged me to leave my comfort zone each day."
– Alexandria*

A Variety of Perspectives

During a SOAAR internship, students learn how food allergy and asthma research are conducted from epidemiological, clinical and public health perspectives. By engaging with that research in a variety of tasks including data extraction, biostatistics, patient interviews, and grant and publication writing, students can better understand the entire research process. The interns also participated in the Smith Health Child Research (SHCR) Intern Group, which provided them with the opportunity to learn from a healthcare or policy professional during a scheduled weekly presentation.

"This internship provides students with the opportunity to see what it means to be a researcher and public health official. Dr. Gupta and the rest of the SOAAR team encourage students to take initiative and learn as much as they can." – Justin

"Not only was I able to obtain a comprehensive picture of clinical research, I also observed cases during clinic that were directly related to what I've learned in medical school." – Mary



Left to right, top row: Pamela, Joanna, Jesse, Justin, Sofia, Chris, Avneet, and Alexandria
Bottom row: Ashley, Jolanta, Kathy, Lauren, Dr. Gupta, Jialing, Madeleine, and Brenda

Personalized Approach

During their first week, SOAAR interns identified which projects to support. Since SOAAR attributes a strength-based philosophy to work, each team member is given space to showcase strengths while simultaneously working to improve weaknesses. To maximize the internship experience, students were mentored by an assigned SOAAR staff member. This personalized approach enabled the interns to gain specific and valuable on-the-job training that will serve them well in future work environments.

"Practicing how to integrate human-centered design into a research and medical context was challenging work and this experience taught me a lot about interdisciplinary communication. Jolanta helped me think through what steps we should take in what order. Her positive and sincere nature served as a great model for how to approach challenging work". – Sasha

"This internship taught me professionalism, problem solving and organization skills that will be useful in any career. As an aspiring doctor and researcher, I have now seen many of the components that are required to produce successful results". – Olivia

SOAAR Team/Office Culture and Environment

The interns noted that the SOAAR team is highly collaborative, caring, and respectful of everyone's opinions. Everyone has a voice, even the interns.

"This group works as a true team. It's amazing to see that everyone was always willing to help each other be successful. SOAAR knows how to get things done and does so while keeping the environment bright and happy. – Sofia

"The team culture was extremely positive. Whenever I had questions, I could ask anyone in the office for help and guidance." – Avneet

Dr. Gupta's Expertise

SOAAR's collaborative philosophy is embraced by everyone on the team, including the director, Ruchi Gupta, MD, MPH. In addition to learning from their assigned mentor, the interns worked with Dr. Gupta and benefited from her expertise. "One of my favorite parts of my job involves mentoring students about research methods, public health and medicine", explains Dr. Gupta. "We educate them in how to ask questions and find answers for important health issues especially related to food allergy

and asthma. We show them how they can help to have a positive impact on the health and lives of children and their families.”

“Dr. Gupta does an amazing job of following her research interests while balancing her involvement in clinic, etc. She has taught me that there is always time to pursue your passions.” – Mary

“Dr. Gupta is one of the most ‘yes’ people I know. She is always looking for ways to make things work and believes greatly in her team. Observing her internal motivation and certainty has been instructive and rewarding.” – Sasha

Dr. Gupta’s Thoughts About 2017 Summer SOAAR Interns

“Our summer interns brought so much positive energy and enthusiasm to our team and reminded us of why we do what we do,” says Dr. Gupta. “They contributed new ideas and questions and moved projects forward.”

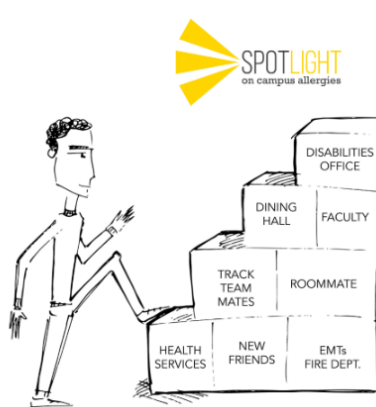
“We had the best group of students this summer and I am so proud of each one of them for their contributions to our SOAAR program mission and research,” adds Dr. Gupta.

How to Participate in the 2018 SOAAR Internship Program

SOAAR interns have diverse backgrounds; many are aspiring clinicians and researchers while others are students who are interested in design and medicine. To apply for a position in next year’s program, email: soaar@northwestern.edu.

To read the complete article with all of the quotes from our interns, visit: www.ruchigupta.com/blog.

Going Back to College with Life-Threatening Allergies



Science and Outcomes of Allergy and Asthma Research (SOAAR) and Allergy & Asthma Network share preparation strategies and a new program on the horizon.

College is an exciting time, full of new possibilities and new friendships. If you have a life-threatening food or latex allergy, it may also feel overwhelming. Whether you're beginning freshman year or your final semester, successfully managing life-threatening allergies at college begins with preparation and communication.... To read the preparation strategies and learn about the *Spotlight on Campus Allergies* program, visit: <http://www.ruchigupta.com/blog/2017/8/31/going-to-college-with-life-threatening-allergies>.

September 2017 Presentations



USAnaphylaxis Summit

On September 15th, Dr. Gupta provided USAnaphylaxis Summit participants with an overview of data collected for the School Policy study, which was supported by Marilyn Freund and Allergy & Asthma Network. This year's summit, hosted by the Network, was held at the Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center at the National Harbor in Maryland. During her presentation, Dr. Gupta shared:

- Parent perspectives on current food allergy policies and their opinions on the need and effectiveness of those policies.
- School nurse perspectives on current food allergy policies utilized in schools and barriers to their implementation.

20th Annual Ullas Young Achievers Can Do Workshop

On September 24th, Dr. Gupta will present on sparking curiosity and staying inquisitive to more than 1,100 University of Madras students during their 20th Annual Ullas Young Achievers CAN DO Workshop held in Chennai, India. This workshop marks the beginning of the student's journey of learning and self-discovery.

2017 Indian Network for Soil Contamination Research (INSCR) International Conference

On September 26th, Dr. Gupta will present "Early Diet and Environment's Impact on Microbiome and the Development of Allergies" at this year's international conference held at the University of Delhi, in Delhi, India. For more information, visit: <https://inscr.in/Conference2017/>.

Research Spotlight



Improving Technology-Assisted Recording of Asthma Control in Children (iTRACC)

The SOAAR team has been recruiting patients from Chicago-area clinics to participate in an asthma management research study and are close to reaching our final goal of 250 participants!

Objective: We hope to improve overall asthma control among children 4-17 years old with moderate-to-severe asthma by comparing the effectiveness of different asthma management strategies.

Study Aims: For children 4-17 years old with moderate to severe asthma, we will:

- Determine factors influencing clinical and psychosocial outcomes of asthma.
- Enhance parental management of child's asthma through comprehensive asthma education and focus on proper inhaler technique.
- Improve overall management by the healthcare team.

Participating patients will be recruited from the following clinics:

- Children's Healthcare Associates
- Chicago Family Asthma and Allergy
- Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
- Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Academic General Pediatrics Clinic
- Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Uptown Clinic

Questions? Email soar@northwestern.edu

In the News

SOAAR is pleased to share the following news coverage about our research:

- [WBUR.org: Severe Allergic Reactions to Food Are Increasing in Adults As Well As Children—August 24, 2017](#)
- [Chicago Health Online: Peanut Free Nation—August 23, 2017](#)
- [Allergic Living: Half of Americans with Food Allergies Gaining Condition as Adults, Finds Study—August 29, 2017](#)

Questions?

Email [Brenda Silvia-Torma, MEd](mailto:Brenda.Silvia-Torma@northwestern.edu), SOAAR Communications Coordinator

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