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Introduction

- Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) affects Aboriginal populations at rates 60 times higher than non-Indigenous populations
- Skin infections, such as scabies and impetigo, also disproportionately affect these communities and have been linked to RHD progression

Objective of Internship

- Gain a deeper understanding of longitudinal research projects using quantitative and qualitative methods
- Engage with and learn about the Aboriginal communities that the research pertains to

Work profile

- Telethon Kids Institute is committed to improving children's health in Aboriginal communities through research and engagement
- The Healthy Skin team, and specifically, the See, Treat, and Prevent (SToP) Trial seeks to end RHD by focusing on skin infections
- I analyzed surveys and interviews on project perception, while also helping wrap up various other small projects

Reflection

I had the privilege of working with many of the team members on different small projects, including:

- Statistical analysis of surveys
- Data entry for bacterial skin infection
- Data checking for cost of goods in Aboriginal communities
- Interview transcriptions of community members on their opinions of the SToP Trial
- Reviewing and editing a book on the research project for distribution



View of Telethon Kids Institute from the 7th floor



Head of Healthy Skin Team Dr. Asha Bowen presenting me with the team mascot during a meeting

- I witnessed and realized the importance of ethical research that tries to work **with** and **alongside** the people it is intended to help, rather than simply conducting research **on** them and leaving afterwards.
- Long-term research obviously requires a lot of planning, but it is also important to be flexible. The pandemic certainly affected the data collection for the SToP trial, but the team was able to adapt and continue their project to fruition.
- Gaining a global perspective is so important for any aspiring physician or researcher, as it allows for the understanding of the similarities and differences between the global and the local in order to change or modify one's approach to problems

Looking ahead

Working with Telethon Kids Institute and the Healthy Skin Team has further strengthened my desire to work in healthcare and pediatrics.

Questions

- How can research methods in engaging Aboriginal communities be applied to research in other countries on other populations, such as those in the U.S.?
- How can we best ensure that physicians and health-care providers are able to provide culturally-sensitive care to their patients?

Conclusion

The opportunity to work in an empathetic, culturally-sensitive research institute while trying to subvert the systemic disparities faced by Aboriginals has left me with a strong desire to uphold these ideals in my work in the future as an aspiring physician.

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