

Recognition of Distinction in Global Health

University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine

Clinical Elective: University of Oxford - Oxford, England

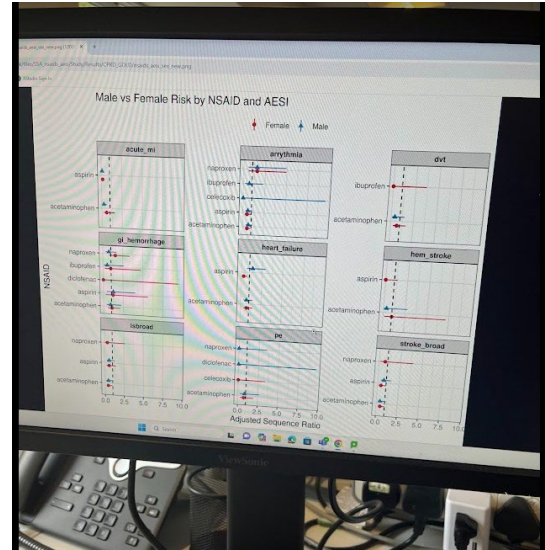
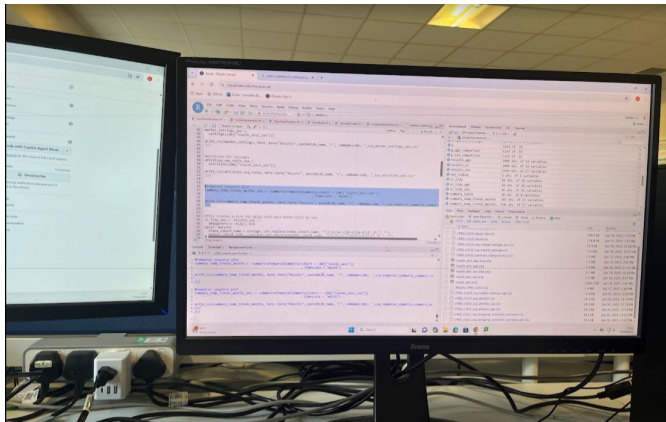
Dates of Training: June 9 – August 1, 2025

Student: Sumedha Bobba

When I first arrived in Oxford, I was immediately struck by the beauty and history of the city. Every corner seemed to hold a story, from the winding cobblestone streets to the magnificent spires of the colleges. I set myself the goal of exploring as many of the colleges as possible and ultimately made it to about twenty. Each one felt like its own world, with chapels full of intricately designed stained-glass windows, peaceful gardens, and unique architectural styles. Walking through the quads, I felt deeply connected to the centuries of scholars who had come before me. It had only been a week, and I already felt so at home there.



My research was in a pharmacoepidemiology lab, and my specific project examined the cardiovascular effects of NSAIDs in large European databases. Coming into the summer, I had no prior coding experience, but I challenged myself to learn R. Throughout the summer, I learned to write my own code...and problem solve when the code broke. I learned to navigate complex datasets, build epidemiologic study designs from the ground up, and apply statistical methods to analyze patterns of risk. I felt so excited each time I got a program to successfully run. What once felt intimidating became a source of pride, as I saw myself growing through this process.



One of the highlights of the summer was participating in the Real World Evidence Summer School, a weeklong course hosted by my lab. Researchers and physicians from across Europe gathered to share their work and perspectives on using data to answer pressing clinical questions. I was inspired by the way these professionals bridged research and patient care, and I learned not only technical approaches but also the mindset needed to make research meaningful. My mentors and colleagues were instrumental in this process as they were always patient in guiding me through challenges and encouraging me to think critically. Their dedication to mentorship reminded me that research is never an individual endeavor, but rather a group journey that grows through diverse collaboration.



Outside the lab, I immersed myself in the cultural life of Oxford. I loved the quiet moments of sitting in college chapels, comparing the stained-glass patterns, or strolling through the gardens

where students and faculty gathered to read or talk. These experiences reminded me of the importance of slowing down and being present, something that is often lost in the fast pace of medical training. Oxford's rich history and traditions created a sense of timelessness that balanced the rigor of my research.

My most memorable adventure was traveling to Wimbledon with one of my lab coworkers. Having grown up watching the tournament on TV, seeing it in person felt surreal. The journey was an adventure in itself—I left Oxford at 3 a.m. to make it into the Queue by 5 a.m. so I could secure a ticket. From 5am to 11pm, I was immersed in the traditional Wimbledon experience while meeting people from all over the world and growing closer with my friend from my lab. The day was long but unforgettable, and it was hands down one of the best experiences of my life.



I also had the chance to travel to Bath, Paris, and Amsterdam, and spent several weekends in London. I made long lasting memories while wandering through Roman baths, marveling at the art and energy of Paris, and soaking in the canals of Amsterdam. One of my favorite experiences was watching *The Lion King* in London.



Through all these experiences, the most valuable lesson I gained was confidence—in myself, in my ability to adapt, and in navigating new settings. Learning R from scratch, traveling internationally, and collaborating with people from diverse cultures taught me that I could thrive while stepping outside of my comfort zone, a lesson that is valuable in medicine. I realized that discomfort is often an opportunity for growth, and I learned to embrace that this summer.

My research experience also helped me find my passions for what I want to do within medicine as a career. I hope to pursue epidemiology research alongside clinical medicine, learning from the European model of sharing healthcare data to promote population health. This summer showed me how research can directly influence patient care, and how collaboration across countries and disciplines can drive innovation. It also reinforced my passion for global health and my belief that health equity requires both scientific rigor and cultural humility.

Looking back, the most rewarding part of the summer was not a single moment, but rather how at home I felt in this new life, balancing the challenges of research, admiring the beauty of Oxford, experiencing the thrill of Wimbledon, cherishing the friendships formed, and appreciating the confidence gained. Together, they created a transformative experience that will guide me through the rest of my medical training.

I am deeply grateful to the University of Oxford, my mentors, and IME for giving me this opportunity. The summer taught me that research is not just about data and results, but about collaboration, creativity, and resilience. It reminded me that medicine is as much about understanding people and cultures as it is about science. Most importantly, it showed me that growth happens when we step outside our comfort zones and embrace the unfamiliar.

