

Opening Doors to Impactful Career Discoveries

The multi-campus, undergraduate students selected for the Summer Undergraduate Clinical Research Internship Program have been diligently working since Monday, June 5, 2023. First, the interns completed a week of foundational training so they would be well-prepared to begin working with their teams (training topics included protection of human research subjects, introductory level Clinical Research Coordinator training, clinical records management, and data management systems). Now, the students are embedded within clinical research teams in their various locations around campus to learn a multitude of duties necessary for successful clinical research professionals, including working with human subjects, acquiring, and analyzing data and/or performing the upfront work necessary to begin a study. The mentoring research teams represent a wide variety of departments including Radiology, Pediatrics, Neurology, Emergency Medicine, Molecular Medicine, and Dermatology, to name a few.

When asked about their experiences during some recent check-ins with a few of the teams, students expressed a deep gratitude for the range of exposure they were given. *"This internship has provided me with so many new experiences and opportunities to learn more about the day-to-day life of a clinical researcher, especially in radiology which was a new area for me. From reviewing study documentation, to meeting with patients and industry contacts, as well as conducting study visits and performing a lot of the behind the scenes work such as data entry and protocol revisions, I have learned so much about what clinical researchers actually do. I've also gained a deeper appreciation for the research community and its operations that I know will carry with me into all my future endeavors."*, noted Christina Ciaramitaro, Class of 2023, from UMass Lowell.



"This internship has provided me with so many new experiences and opportunities to learn more about the day-to-day life of a clinical researcher, especially in radiology which was a new area for me. From reviewing study documentation, to meeting with patients and industry contacts, as well as conducting study visits and performing a lot of the behind the scenes work such as data entry and protocol revisions, I have learned so much about what clinical researchers actually do. I've also gained a deeper appreciation for the research community and its operations that I know will carry with me into all my future endeavors.", noted Christina Ciaramitaro, Class of 2023, from UMass Lowell.

One of her mentors, Sara Schiller, MPH, Sr. Research Program Manager, Dept. of Radiology, stated, *"The internship experience has been wonderful for us. Christina contributed greatly to our study team this summer by recruiting study participants, conducting study visits, and helping with data entry and other projects. At the same time, we provided Christina with hands-on work in clinical research and interaction with industry sponsors - experiences that will hopefully carry her into the next phase of her career."* Christina is pictured above discussing a participant CT scan with her mentor, Sara Schiller.

We also spoke to Batoul Chouiki, Class of 2024, UMass Boston, who is working with Dr. Houston and Dr. Singh from the Department of Neurology. Batoul provided the following statement about her experience so far. *"During my clinical research internship in the Neurology and Ophthalmology department, I found myself at the forefront of new medical devices. While I did not work on any active trials, I got to see how much work goes on in setting the stage for clinical research. I was entrusted with a hands-on responsibility, collaborating with experienced researchers, and navigating the complexities of real-world research administration scenarios. This eye-opening experience, as well as the freedom to explore and shadow various departments throughout my 9-week journey, has allowed me to hone my critical thinking, data analysis, and communication skills. This*



internship has narrowed down the career path I will take so that I can make tangible contributions to advancements in patient care and medical innovation.”

Pictured above on right, Batoul is wearing and testing a virtual reality application being developed by Dr. Singh, Postdoctoral Associate, Department of Neurology, at left, for research for ocular cranial nerve palsy. Recruitment for this study will begin in the near future.

Also visited was Alice Moreira, UMass Lowell, Class of 2024. *“The CRC is a great place to learn about all kinds of clinical research. I’m grateful to have been a part of it and meeting all the amazing people working behind the scenes of clinical research, from regulatory to patient care and beyond. Now, I realize how much work goes into human subject research, and how many moving parts need to come together to make a trial run smoothly. I’m also very thankful to all the welcoming professionals I was able to shadow and learn from all over UMass Chan, this experience has definitely furthered my interest in a career in research.”*



In this photo, Alice is practicing putting a blood pressure cuff on Clinical Research Center (CRC) staff member, Rafael Fernandes, Clinical Research Coordinator III. Taking vital signs of participants in clinical studies conducted at the CRC is one of the many skills Alice has been learning.

Alice’s mentor, Bethany Trainor, RN, BSN, CCRP, Research Nurse Manager, had this to say: *“It has been a great experience having our summer intern - it is fun to share our research and clinical knowledge with an enthusiastic audience. She has been a great help with our research participants, lab work and the never-ending documentation and regulatory paperwork. She definitely has made our summer more enjoyable!”*

Intern Mariana Hebert, Class of 2023, UMass Dartmouth, who has been working in the Department of Molecular Medicine, said this: *“The opportunity to work in the laboratory and with patients allowed me to see a more complete picture of clinical research and practice a wider range of skills.”* In this photo, Mariana is gathering and isolating DNA from samples taken from participants that are positive for Epstein-Barr virus. Her mentors, Robin Brody, Research Associate, Tim Macatee, Sr. Research Scientist and Safa HasanAqad, Research Tech specialist stated this about their time working with Mariana, *“Even though it has only been what seems like a few short weeks, It has been a pleasure working with Mariana; she has worked alongside us as a team member to propel our research forward. As a lab, we hope that we were able to provide her with both an educational and enriching experience.”*

The CCTS launched the internship program during Summer 2022 as a workforce development experience designed to expose undergraduate students to translational science and the array of roles and functions performed by clinical research professionals. The experience and mentorship the interns are receiving hold significant value – and appear to be hitting the mark!

