

Norbert Kuc

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Science

Major(s): Biological Sciences

Minors(s): No

Scholar Group Membership: No

Did you received other funding for this project?: No

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Grogan Fellowship

Project Location: Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Radiology Department, Chicago, IL

ND Faculty Mentor: NA

Project Type: Grogan Fellowship

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD), Career discernment and/or preparation

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Very Much

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Yes

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]: Yes

Tell us about your experience.

My research looked at asbestos-related pleural disease in insulator workers. I helped with a retrospective study looking a disease prevalence in a specific population. My project was designed to assess whether current asbestos exposure regulations are effective at preventing asbestos-related lung disease. I learned to examine Low Dose CT lung cancer screenings and identify signs of asbestos exposure. I compiled and analyzed data from over 500 patients to discover previously unknown trends in the incidence of asbestos-related pleural disease over the decades. Our data suggests that these regulations are not as effective as assumed, and we found an alarmingly large amount of asbestos-exposed patients even in situations where they should have been protected by these regulations. I presented my work in a poster presentation, and the data was presented to the workers to notify them of the continued risks they face. Beyond my research advancements, my personal knowledge increased greatly. I grew to better understand the medical profession, and I developed an extensive understanding of asbestos-related pleural disease.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

This project was significant for me as it represented my introduction to the world of clinical research. As a basic science researcher at Notre Dame, this opportunity allowed me to transition my skills to a new research environment, better preparing me for my future investigative work. I also learned a lot about medicine, including medical terminology and procedures. My project also helped those I worked with, as I helped to protect the insulator workers that were the target of my research. I identified risks they face and informed them of these dangers, helping them to be better informed about the truths of their work environment.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

This experience is highly relevant to my future as I aspire to become a medical professional. It helped me become more familiar with medical terminology and with the medical profession in general, as I was heavily immersed in the Radiology Department at Northwestern Memorial. This experience helped me explore the world of clinical research, which is something I hold a strong desire to incorporate into my career. It also put me in a position to submit my work to conferences, helping spark the beginning of my career in this field.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

I would encourage students to explore their ideas without fear of being ignored. Oftentimes in research, those who are already firmly established in their careers look towards students for fresh ideas and inspiration. By freely pursuing and exploring the novel ideas that students bring to the field, new and innovative solutions can be created. I would also encourage students to be open about possible research topics. As a cancer researcher, I knew little about asbestos-related pleural disease at the start of my experience. However, looking back it was a great experience to be exposed to research on this very different disease as it provided me with valuable insight into an exciting field I would not have otherwise explored.

I acknowledge that this form has been filled out truthfully and to the best of my ability. I understand that this information will be shared with many different CUSE constituencies. As such, I have provided as much useful information as I was able. I understand that CUSE will not complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.
nkuc@nd.edu

