

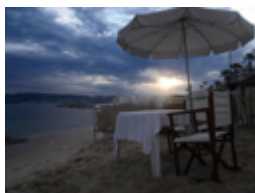
Student's Research Adventure - 2009

Aleksandra Obradov in the Netherlands



For this summer I created a fantastic two month research and travel experience. Last year I began emailing research directors who were conducting interesting projects all throughout Europe (I really wanted to go abroad). After hearing back from a few, I decided that the Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam, Netherlands was the best fit.

I am now working on a project within the National Generation R Study with Drs. Rachel Bakker,



who is the study coordinator, as well as the director of the national study, Dr. Vincent Jaddoe (www.generationr.nl ^[1]). The study deals with testing and observing the progress from fetal stages to young adulthood in order to improve the understanding of normality and abnormalities in children. I am specifically assisting with the analytical and statistical aspects of a study in which we are observing the effect of caffeine from coffee and tea on fetal growth and development.

It has been very exciting as I have learned a lot about medical statistics (actual applied math!), biological mechanisms, and how coffee works in our bodies, but moreover I have been able to see the similarities and differences between the researchers and the way they conduct the research in the US and the Netherlands. I feel that people here are much more relaxed at work. Unlike any of the research facilities I have worked at in the US, there many young doctors who are not practicing yet, but are first doing research to further their knowledge, for fun (one of them actually told me that!). I cannot imagine anyone who has finished medical school and residency in America to put off working as a doctor and go back to conduct research and get their PhD or masters.

Everyone is very nice, and I am so glad that absolutely everyone knows English! Also, I feel like I am really being “Green” here. Everyone here rides bikes, walks, or takes the bus/tram/metro/train. All the toilets have special flushing mechanisms, so that you only use a little



water. You have to buy grocery bags, and everyone reuses them. All lights are eco-friendly. I have not yet been in a building with air-conditioning. Their recycling is meticulous. I even went to a presentation called World Ocean at the Erasmus University, where they further drilled the importance of reducing our carbon footprint; the grandson of Jacques Cousteau was one of the main speakers, among a chemist, artist, and radical activist. It was really eye-opening and inspirational.

Rotterdam is a very different city from any other place in the Netherlands. It was completely demolished in World War II, so all the architecture is modern, there are skyscrapers everywhere, and there is constant construction, but there is still a hint of the old culture visible. For example, my apartment, I am living in an old church that is now being used for student housing!



I have had the pleasure to travel through several cities in Holland, visit Nice in France, and I am still planning on going to London, Spain, and Germany. So far it has been an amazing and unforgettable trip!

[Undergraduate](#)^[2]

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[1] <http://www.generationr.nl>

[2] <http://www.chem.arizona.edu/taxonomy/term/11>