

Library Research Award Essay

During my time here at the University of Maryland, I have been exposed to some of the greatest role models and leaders in research. I was taught the success of research comes down to the basic principals of determination, collaboration, and empathy. While many research opportunities were created for me, I learned along the way that it takes ambition, creativity and resilience to succeed. As an undergraduate, we must not fear our mistakes, but instead, we must learn from them to make us better people.

I began researching this topic while working in a research group at the School of Public Health that aimed to explained barriers to colonoscopy results. The professors recently published a paper titled: *Examining Patient Understanding of Colonoscopy Results: Implications of Health Literacy*. They encouraged undergraduate research participation to assist in continuing the study at the University of Maryland Medical Center.

While working on quantitative analysis, my two professors suggested to me to go to Hornbake Library and utilize IBM SPSS software to explore unseen trends in the current data. This led me to discover the causal relationship between perceived concern and knowledge about colorectal cancer. This stayed consistent with the overall theme of studying possible barriers to receiving a colonoscopy and follow up care relating to patient factors. As part of this research group/supplemental independent learning course, our deliverable would be a literature review. For this literature review, I received assistance from Dr. Evelyn King-Marshall who is the lead professor on the study. She showed me how to use the online library database catalog for research and showed me the databases that she uses for public health research. Databases such as Ebsco Host and ESI proved to be the most effective. This was very eye opening for me, because I never knew of any other databases that existed outside of PubMed and Google Scholar.

Dr. King-Marshall did a great job explaining how every database and available resource could be advantageous to a student researcher. She taught me how to distinguish between medical and public health databases and how public health databases span across many social sciences such as family science, education, sociology, and psychology. I choose my sources by first looking at Google Scholar. I was shown after searching articles that you can find more in depth research related to the article when you select the "cited by" option and "cited" option. I could then be bridged to an overwhelming network of literature that is related to my topic and look back through pertinent sources like the Journal of Adolescent Health and the American Journal of Public Health. This also was helpful in creating consistently in my bibliography with the "create a citation" option. After compiling an extensive visual web of how sources were related, I narrowed down my sources based off of how each source contained background information and existing methods for the research project that I was creating.

This research project was unique because the concept of my literature review was developed from my quantitative findings. This led to the development of a systematic review of the literature: identifying factors that will lead to increased colorectal cancer screening. This systematic review evolved into the introduction of my research study titled: *Factors that determine perceived concern and knowledge about colorectal cancer*. The study was submitted, accepted, and presented at the American Public Health Association annual conference in Denver, Colorado on October 31, 2016.

This was a huge step in my career in terms of being confident enough to share my findings with valid, accurate sources to support it. This taught me that research is much more hard work, but it can be fun learning and immersing yourself in the literature along the way. As I look to take the next step into graduate school next fall, I will remember the importance of seeking assistance. There is not one way of researching a topic and research papers are conceived from a variety of sources and theories. Collaboration is important to opening the eyes to new perspectives of research and deviating from the traditional solitary route.

Looking back on this experience, I wish I had talked to more professors and librarians about which databases they used in order to create a well-rounded systematic review. I wish I took the initiative to visit McKeldin Library to see what support existed there. McKeldin library can be very overwhelming by being the biggest undergraduate library on campus. I felt it would be hard for me to navigate on my own, and that most librarians are providing assistance at all times due to the heavy traffic of people. I believe the library can help overcome those barriers through fun social events outside on McKedlin Mall during the beginning of fall to welcome in people and get to know the staff. The staff can talk to students and answer questions so when students come back at the end of the semester for assistance.

This experience taught me about personal growth and perseverance along the way. I would not have gotten this far without the lessons I have learned from the Behavioral Community Health Department and the on-campus resources that I am fortunate enough to have. I believe the Library Research Award is not only an award to help me, but an award that brings attention to the basic principals of determination, collaboration, and empathy that research at this university stands for and will help many other ambitious undergraduates researchers along the way.