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I wrote my research paper *The Detrimental Effects of Dietary Supplements* for the course MIEH300, an Introduction to Environmental Health: A Public Health Perspective. Our professor, Dr. Devon Payne-Sturges, had assigned a persuasive writing assignment in which we were to appeal to a freshman cousin on an environmental health issue. We were to find our topics from an environmental health newsletter titled "Above the Fold" and supplement the article we chose with our own research and argument.

As I began my research, the topic that most interested me was an article on a dramatic increase in emergency room visits due to dietary supplement usage. I was immediately reminded of the shelves in my own medicine cabinet, which were lined with similar supplements, all with labels that promised to improve my health in some way. This struck me as a pertinent issue to research because the public deserves to be informed on the possible health risks that posed by seemingly beneficial over the counter supplements.

Dr. Payne-Sturges made a library resources module available to my class that greatly aided my research process. This module was titled the Health Sciences Library Resources Canvas course, kindly brought to us by Nedelina Tchangalova, a Physical Sciences and Public Health librarian. One technique I found particularly useful from this module was the MeSH, or Medical Subject Headings, search method. The PubMed database served as my primary resource to find biomedical literature on dietary supplements and I soon realized that I was limiting my search results by only using one keyword or phrase. The MeSH function of PubMed, as outlined in the resource module, allowed me to gather more search results that were relevant to my topic by simultaneously searching the database with different combinations of keywords such as "dietary supplements", "micronutrients", "vitamins", and "phytochemicals." MeSH also provides search builder options such as subheadings including "adverse effects" which improved my search results. Using this technique I was able to quickly locate relevant journal articles on the observed adverse health effects related to dietary supplement usage.

I sought assistance mainly from my professor because I found that the real challenge of the assignment was how to tailor the information I was incorporating to the specific audience of the paper prompt, in addition to connecting dietary supplements to environmental health. Her advice helped to refine my paper's focus and allowed me to broaden its applications. The library resources module also served me well as a guide and I appreciated the convenience of having the information on research techniques and citation styles all in one place. The module's

public health focus eliminated my initial confusion regarding where to begin my search, and greatly helped streamline my writing process.

I selected my sources from databases such as PubMed as well as Google Scholar and BioMed Central to ensure that I would find peer-reviewed medical literature to further bolster my argument on the dangers of dietary supplements. I evaluated my sources based on their authority, accuracy, purpose, and content. Before delving into a lengthy journal article I first took note of the author's credentials to determine their authority on the subject, as well as analyze any research methodology used. Next, I read the abstract to familiarize myself with the findings of the article and examine the content as well as any explicit purpose reflected in their conclusion. I restricted my research mainly to databases comprised of peer-reviewed journal articles to ensure that only accurate information would be included in my paper.

Throughout the research process, I learned that specificity, both in my original research query as well as in the terms and keywords I used to conduct research, is the key to creating an answerable question and obtaining the most relevant information to successfully persuade my reader. The skill of fine-tuning my focus will serve my academic career by encouraging me to delve deeper into a particular topic rather than unsuccessfully attempting to cover every aspect of a broad subject. University of Maryland librarians, as well as professors, have taught me that research is truly a collaborative process, which is a principle I will carry with me throughout both my academic and professional careers. Synthesizing my own argument through this assignment allowed me to become a part of the ongoing academic conversation that is fueled by research. I hope to one day contribute my own findings to the research community in my professional career, and this research experience has helped to solidify that desire.

One way the library could be a better place for my research needs is the inclusion of a citation manager within the library or Canvas sites. A major challenge I encountered throughout the research process was organizing my findings and keeping them all in one place. As a student, I find myself using both the McKeldin library computers as well as my own laptop, so it would be convenient to have a citation manager add-on that would be specific to the UMD databases to further streamline the research process for college students. Overall, my experience was overwhelmingly positive and I have the library staff and services to thank for providing me with the tools to explore the fascinating world of research.