

**Lily Hong**

### **Reflective Essay**

I know most people have never even heard of anosmia, and only a handful of specialists know how the condition works. For this reason, people with anosmia, like myself, desire more information than the general definition that can be found on WebMD. I wanted to enlighten myself and others by writing up a literature review on this topic and hopefully inspiring further research in this area. However, the articles accessible to the general public mainly talk about anosmia at a distance, summarizing definitions, and listing multiple causes without further elaboration. Because my review is written from a scientific background and written with personal experience with anosmia, it covers how and why anosmics experience what they do. My review of anosmia provides rare insight from a personal and biological standpoint, presented professionally in an academic review paper.

Initially, I searched anosmia in the library system, hoping there would be articles on specific aspects of anosmia. This failed, so I went to google to generate a basic outline of terms and keywords for common causes, a few effects, and any potential treatments which would help inform a lay audience about anosmia. With a bulleted outline set up, I went back to the library system and used my newfound keywords like “congenital anosmia” or “steroid anosmia”. These terms helped me find starter articles, but they all had new unique information and nothing to support these statements. After my first round of research, I went into each individual article and looked up their citations, searching for more resources with supporting or conflicting results.

With the UMD Library search engine, it was very easy to find these articles, check online availability, and after reading the articles, cite in the correct format. Sometimes the articles did not have online availability in the UMD system, but with the title found in the library search engine, I simply needed to google the title and find the NIH copy of the same article. To sort through all these articles, I skimmed the abstract first to see if they pertained to my topic, determining if the article fit under background introduction, causes of anosmia, effects of anosmia, or treatments. Then I skimmed the methods and discussion sections to make sure I understood what the abstract meant and could later write about it without simply regurgitating the abstract. I also found a few articles that weren’t substantial enough scientifically, like an article that danced around a conclusion about the drug Prednisone. However, these articles also had many citations, and I ended up using their sources to find better information on the uses and effectiveness of the drug.

Beyond the library resources, I also sought guidance from my professor, Dr. James Goodwin. With his help, I narrowed the topic down from a broad all-encompassing topic on anosmia to simply causes of anosmia. I could not find enough sources to talk about the causes for five pages, so I expanded my research to include causes, effects, and treatments on anosmia. He encouraged me to take advantage of my student access to the library resources to find and discuss information not available to the general public. His advice on this paper was for me to imagine I was the audience. What would I want to gain after reading this article? The audience should read my review because they want to know more, not

because they needed an official source to cite the same repetitive information found on Google. With his advice, I would chose articles with information that a concerned young scholar would find helpful.

From the research process, I learned to skim efficiently through articles, and to extract vital information. The UMD library system's easy-to-use search engine, reliable articles, self-explanatory filters, organized citations, and abstract previews all made the research process less stressful. In researching this paper, I learned also how to navigate around a lack of relevant articles in the search engines. I realized I could use citations from the articles I already had gathered, or even articles from an educational site found on Google. This process prepared me academically as I will be researching and writing papers throughout medical school and will need these research skills to find and use resources effectively and efficiently. To prepare me for my future in the medical field, reading through so many research articles has familiarized me with the professional jargon and tone I should know as a future doctor. I would not change anything in this research process, as I truly did enjoy learning about anosmia and writing a scientific piece on such a personal topic. It was tedious and I may have lost sleep working on this paper, but I came out of each night proud of my work, and came into each day excited to find dozens of articles with bits and pieces of interesting new information to combine into a unique and informative research paper.