

Summer I Reflective Report

Laidlaw Scholar: Lucas Maughan

Project: The Tips for Improving Disposal of Your Unused Pills and Potions Safely (TIDY-UPS) Study

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Pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance are the five recognised stages of behaviour change, all of which I circled through during the imagination, designing and execution of my project, The TIDY-UPS Study. Not everything went to plan or was expected to go to plan. I don't believe this was a fault of my own but rather the natural unavoidable course of a project. Things such as physically printing the survey for distribution in waiting rooms were avoided due to COVID-19 and additional ethical approval requirements, but solutions were implemented to get the most out of the project. I wanted to include a financial incentive to take the survey however it was not considered feasible due to the additional demands GDPR/DPIA processes would place on the project's timeline. The survey was initially planned to run for two/three weeks during the summer (2021) however ended up being successfully launched at a later date. This was mostly due to normal delays in ethical approval with small amounts of consultation and reviewal of the survey by other academics for study validity.

My principal supervisor (Dr Tamasine Grimes) has been brilliant. She is an expert in the field and is very kind and fair. Communication with her has been very manageable despite COVID-19 restrictions. There were times my supervisor invited me to educate her on the Laidlaw Programme thus owing to a mutual, respectful and positive teamwork. My supervisor encouraged me to work persistently on the project and helped me develop resilience required in the field of research.

Engaging with others connected to my research was quite enjoyable. I began to become aware of the importance of being able to summarise your research in a few sentences/an elevator pitch as not everyone has the time to read several paragraphs. I noted the importance of everyone's contribution. For example, with PPI (Patient and Public involvement) we utilised panel members to contribute to making the study/survey more 'lay friendly'. It also helped us validate the importance of our study and what suggestions PPI members had. This of course brought with it many discussions around topics raised – I used critical thinking skills to discuss the importance and validity of each idea raised whilst working with my team to ascertain if a PPI member's thoughts were of high importance

in order to change part of the study. As a result, I learnt how to acknowledge thoughts but also defend my own ideas. I also dealt with members of the public's concerns associated with medication waste and the different level of information to which I ethically could provide them with.

Logistically, organising delivery of the posters through to the School of Pharmacy was a new experience to me. Liaising with the school's Senior Executive Officer (Elizabeth O'Shaughnessy) made this process so much easier. She recommended companies for printing and associated supplies. Then came the challenge of sending posters, ethical approval and invitation sheets to over 100 pharmacies (4 per county, 200 more to be sent soon). I recruited volunteering friends to package the posters, I had to communicate with Trinity's mail room also and ensure everything came in under budget.

I suppose the difficult part of this enjoyable project was the uncertainty and consistent work schedule required to ensure success. Maintaining effort while revising parts of the survey repeatedly was difficult at times, but most definitely was a key developer of resilience. I found communication really easy and enjoyable! As the project progressed, I became more comfortable in communicating my honest thoughts. I really enjoyed getting to show others my work and recruit participants to the study and also guiding/leading others on my project. I found my style of leadership blossomed through this summer's research project. I found I was able to look at a problem and calmly think and propose solutions and then execute those solutions whilst still taking on the thoughts of my team and asking for help when needed. I noticed myself start making timeline plans accounting for others' needs and leading team meetings. Leading among a team of well-established academics was a bit intimidating at the beginning but I soon became comfortable doing so. I felt there was an air of confusion around my paper being published however effective communication skills lead to a resolution.

Working within a team has been very useful in this project. With a team one can either lose creative influence or maintain it to an even higher standard given the correct leadership style, and that is what I believe occurred here. The team worked well together to provide the best outcome.

Originally it consisted of Dr Tamasine Grimes, Dr Sam Cromie and Aaron Koay. With team members departing from the project I communicated more and more with Tamasine and other members of academic and non-academic fields. A 4th year student on placement with Dr Grimes (Maryam Almutairi) then joined the team aiding in managing the already established social media platforms. This gave me an opportunity to practice leadership skills with multiple people in an ever-changing team dynamic e.g. being able to induct/bring new team members up to speed, educating them and

approving/guiding their work. I also collaborated with academics in Trinity, Ireland and internationally in developing this study. I have to say I loved this part of the project.

“Research builds resilience” is one of the first things I remember my supervisor telling me in the application phase. Never has that been more true as in this project. When imagining an idea we often like to think it can impulsively and immediately happen overnight but that is not the case. Instead, it takes months of planning, execution and constant reconsidering to bring an idea to fruition. For me, I noticed periods of burnout in my project as it was sat in ‘limbo’ awaiting ethical approval. Periods of slow movement in the study hampered my determination. However, this was counteracted by the excitement felt when the project was finally being approved by the research and ethics committee. I think this is normal in a project that takes several months of work to prosper. In the meantime, I completed stakeholder analyses, literature searches, PPI reviews and documents, translated the survey to Spanish and many other tasks to improve my research skills and knowledge in the area. Doing new things like these rather than monotonous reviewal of my survey helped me regain interest. Another hamper to my resilience were times when I was on holiday and changes to the survey were necessary so it could be sent to ethical approval soon. Seeing other scholars finish their projects and return to regular academic assignments and study was also something sparking contemplation, however, I am extremely grateful for the chance to carry out such research and I am so glad I have done it despite the long months of resilience and responsibility it required!

Leadership attributes and personal development

Currently, I believe good leadership requires communication, adaptation, persistence/motivation and teamwork. I also think confidence is so important to getting a task done. If you believe it will happen and you have the drive to make it happen, unless it is extremely unfeasible or there is an enormous unlikely complication, and even still, it will happen. “Whether you believe it or not you are right”, I think is really applicable here. I learned that things don’t happen unless you make them happen, but that you can make them happen. Another core aspect of being a leader is being comfortable with uncertainty and the long time it may take for you to reach this certainty. For instance, there is no point in being extremely concerned about something outside your control because that will not alter the path of the outcome. Often times there were things which I would have liked resolved immediately but couldn’t – excess worry about these things would have only

caused me unnecessary distress possibly hindering my ability to lead the project, and so, dealing with the problems and reassuring yourself you can do no more is quite important.

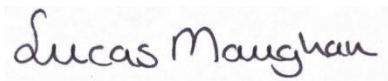
I think the programme has equipped me with versatile skills to change my leadership style depending on the scenario with which I am faced. We cannot perfectly prepare for everything, but we can prepare for how we react to whatever that 'everything' entails. I feel that my coaching and transformational leadership skills have been developed the most. I was able to be motivational (intra-personally and interpersonally) while also challenging ideas and being very communicative. I don't know of another research foundation that would give me such a monumental and potent opportunity.

I joined the programme because I wanted to develop my skills as a researcher and leader – which I believe I have achieved and will hopefully continue to achieve throughout the rest of my time within the Laidlaw programme. Since joining and learning more, I am even more interested motivating others to evoke change. I find it very satisfying carrying out my own projects but doing so whilst catalysing others to make changes is even more rewarding. Bearing on personal challenges, this summer's experiences have thought me the true depth of validity associated with the phrase "It will always work out in the end", no matter how stressful something may appear, it will always be ok. Once we realise this then the levels of stress will lower and we can tackle tasks which may appear more and more 'stressful' or 'scary'.

The leadership sessions taught me a great deal. Firstly, that speaking to someone who's work inspires you will not be seen as you trying to use them for an opportunity but rather they will appreciate your interest and know of your true intentions such that should an opportunity you desire arise in future they will consider informing you. I learnt of the failures of leadership such as competence, character and commitment failures. I discovered the importance of trust and even when someone is a high performer, if they have low trust, they are likely to be a terrible leader. I put this to practice in using my Laidlaw Scholar status to network with other scholars and find out their intentions and interests. I plan to continue this networking into future not just for my own career prospects but to build trust and help in spreading awareness of my research. I gave a lot of effort toward recruiting participants for my study which also required networking whilst taking care not to bombard followers with my study.

In the second half of the programme I wish to develop more my international communication e.g. with researchers in New York, London etc. and perhaps translate my research to a similar topic with different research methods via summer 2. I also wish to use my Leadership skills to publish a

research paper disseminating my findings and then targeting these findings toward policymakers giving my project a real world purpose. Publishing a paper would allow me to gain a strong 'upcoming' presence in my field allowing me to use the leadership skills taught to me by Laidlaw for good. Moreover, I wish to attend conferences with my poster/paper. I think this experience has built a lot of growth and confidence into my character, removed my fears of failure and despite the difficulties, I am very grateful and excited for part two.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Lucas Maughan" in a cursive, slightly slanted script. The letters are connected, and the overall style is casual and personal.