



**Laidlaw Scholars Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme**  
**Record of Reflection**

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**Research Advisor: Dr. Sara Allin**

**September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**

My first summer as a Laidlaw Scholar was nothing short of fulfilling, engaging, and an incredible learning experience. The opportunity to promote and engage with important scholarly work within my undergraduate career is an incredible privilege, and I feel like I have performed with this premise in mind.

Pursuing my research prompt of, “Analyzing the Effect of Healthcare System Type and Socioeconomic Status on Healthcare Access and Results During COVID-19: A Cross-Country Review”, was a very important endeavor for me. With the immense budget cuts occurring in the United States for any global health-related services, the ability for me to engage in the public health research community is stunted for the foreseeable future. Therefore, as I’ve mentioned in past check-ins and meetings, the opportunity for me to conduct global health research with international and institutional support (thank you University of Toronto and the Laidlaw Foundation!) is an opportunity I did not take for granted.

Luckily, my research processes this summer went very smoothly. Initially, I applied for an REB that was unfortunately not approved. However, because I applied for it as a “precaution” (and to simply have an option for my research methodology), and didn't rely on the actual approval of the REB, I was able to get around this lack of approval and proceed with my work. From that point on, my research procedures became quite straightforward – conducting a literature review was something I have done in the past, so this familiarity with the scope of work was an asset. I slowly but surely chipped away at each section of the paper, adding in more and more details and context as I saw fit.

When I finished my first draft by mid-June, I met and communicated with my research advisor, Dr. Sara Allin, on how to improve my work and writing. Dr. Allin left some detailed and thoughtful critiques that truly elevated the structure and content of my research paper, making my final product even stronger and more eloquent than I could have envisioned prior to her feedback.

When I initially applied for the Laidlaw Scholars Programme, I outlined two core competencies (out of eight total) that I particularly wanted to engage with and improve for my future career as a physician-policymaker: self-knowledge and awareness and social and cultural intelligence and awareness. The opportunity to construct my own research question to dive into specific areas of interest was enthralling, quenching my thirst for tackling difficult questions with complicated solutions. Additionally, my relative unfamiliarity with the issues I was exploring posed additional learning obstacles to overcome. Gaining insight into the social structures partitioning different groups of individuals is critical to facilitating global collaboration, communication, and more equitable treatment of others (and in my case, stronger pandemic preparedness initiatives). Therefore, through the cross-country and socioeconomic elements of my project, as well as the whole premise of generating your own prompt for exploration, allowed me to strengthen the core

competencies of self-knowledge and awareness and social and cultural intelligence and awareness.

Because we are human, there were some inevitable kinks in the research process overall. Given the sheer magnitude of the work to be produced (alongside all the other deliverables), at times I felt a bit overwhelmed and like I didn't know where to start/how to continue. When I got to that point in my thought process, I took a break from my work and resumed after taking a non-academic break (i.e., reading or playing music). This allowed me to recharge and refocus myself on the task at hand. Additionally, the urge to procrastinate was obviously looming, and, though I was able to work consistently to get my paper done way ahead of schedule, occasionally I was struck with daily procrastination (i.e., starting work later than planned or making less progress than anticipated). When this occurred, I would recenter myself by redefining my goals for the day, so they were truly attainable, and set milestones along the way that had a positive reinforcement system (like the Pomodoro study method, for example).

All in all, I am very satisfied with my work this summer within the Laidlaw Scholars Programme, and I am very proud of the research I conducted. I gained a lot of insight into what it takes to pursue academic research, and I am excited to continue integrating research projects through my undergraduate and post-grad careers. And, studying Switzerland, in conjunction with Canada and the United States, has inspired me to pursue career opportunities for my second Laidlaw summer in the country, among many other places. Looking forward to a wonderful year of Laidlaw activities!