

UCL SOP VOLUNTEERING

Give back, better yourself and overcome your fears



8th Edition, March 2019

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1. What year are you in?

I'm in the third year of the MPharm degree.

2. Where did you volunteer?

Over the summer, I volunteered in one of the British Heart Foundation charity shops. Their charity shops are located across London and the whole of the UK. During my time there, I organised stock, assisted customers, and helped to raise public awareness of fundraising events run by the charity itself.

3. Can you tell me a bit more about the charity?

The British Heart Foundation helps to fund research into the causes, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cardiovascular diseases. Heart and circulatory diseases affect a significant proportion of the UK public; these diseases are responsible for 1 in 4 deaths within the UK.

Their charity shops help to raise funds by providing a host of products services. The charity also takes donations and regularly organises fundraising events, such as the London to Brighton bike ride.

4. What made you decide to start volunteering?

Volunteering was a great way for me to expand my portfolio of experiences and get involved in extra-curricular activities that have the potential to aid my personal development.

I also thought that involvement with an organisation such as the British Heart Foundation would enhance my understanding of the functionality of such charities and their influence on healthcare advancements.

5. What was the best thing about volunteering?

I enjoyed meeting new people; whether it was members of the public or fellow volunteers and colleagues. This provided me with an opportunity to learn from my peers about the charity itself as well as other miscellaneous things. Many of people that I met had genuinely interesting stories to tell.

6. What was the most challenging thing about volunteering?

I think many people may find the time commitment to be the most challenging aspect. However, many charities are often very flexible with working hours therefore you can tailor your volunteering shifts around a weekly routine.

Also, language barriers that affected communication often made it quite difficult to carry out certain roles. However, I soon developed the ability to utilise other resources to communicate aside from the use of language.

7. Do you feel like you've made a difference volunteering?

Yes, I do feel as though I have made a difference. Volunteering is a very rewarding venture; even the smallest of contributions can have a significant and positive impact on important public health concerns.

8. How has volunteering helped you with your Pharmacy degree?

Assisting members of the public has helped to develop my communication skills which can be applied to a variety of pharmacy-related settings. Interaction with members of the public is fundamental to a range of career avenues, not just hospital and community pharmacy, therefore it is an important skill to master regardless of your career ambitions.

Learning about the British Heart Foundation itself has also helped to contextualise and put into perspective the prevalence of such health concerns. I have since applied this newfound acknowledgement and understanding of disease burdens on societies and individuals to clinical practice in pharmacy and hospital settings.

9. In your opinion do you think volunteering is important?

I would encourage everyone to volunteer at some point in their lives. It is crucial to participate in independently sought-out experiences and opportunities to enhance your skillset.

If you've been inspired by Ina's experience, you can find out more about volunteering with The British Heart Foundation on the UCL volunteering website and here: <https://www.bhf.org.uk>