

International Healthcare Experience in Pharmacy: London

STEP

SECOND-YEAR TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

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A view of London from the plane.

Description: My STEP Project involved traveling to London, England with the OSU College of Pharmacy for one week during Spring Break (3/12/2017-3/19/2017). We visited cultural sites as well as sites of pharmacy practice to compare life and pharmacy in England with our lives and understanding of pharmacy in the United States. Also, during this process, I was able to get to know and network with faculty and other students in the College of Pharmacy.

What I learned: During my STEP project, I learned a lot about what pharmacists in the United Kingdom can do and how they have expanded their duties to make up for the shortage of doctors that the health system is currently facing. The group visited different sites of pharmacy practice, and I learned about the integral roles that pharmacists play in the health system and how important political activism is in order to keep and expand these roles (in both the United States and the UK). I also had the fortune of meeting a lot of interesting pharmacists with unique jobs and learning about them, what they do, and their stories.

In addition, I learned a lot about myself: about what I am capable of, that I am more independent and better at solving problems that I thought.



The study abroad group outside of the UCL (University College London) Pharmacy school.

Impact to academic, personal and life goals: In terms of my understanding of pharmacy changing, the visit to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society really opened my eyes about the political activism side of being a professional. During this trip, the speaker laid out how pharmacists got to the level of respect and responsibility that they have, and a lot of it was through political change. I realized that there is a lot of political work to be done in the United States surrounding pharmacy. For example, achieving provider status is a legislative change that will allow pharmacists to be billed in the same way that doctors are, allowing part of their salaries to be paid by insurance companies instead of solely by hospitals. This will allow hospitals to hire more pharmacists, and the pharmacists will be able to take on more roles and serve patients in many more ways like they do in the United Kingdom. There are many more pharmacists in the United Kingdom with unique patient-serving roles, like working in their own clinics and in doctor's offices or offering smoking cessation and travel planning services within community pharmacies. This experience really emphasized that political participation is very important, and extends past just voting in elections. It's important to be informed about and involved in the issues that are important to you and your career. Hearing this speaker has definitely made me pay more attention to current events locally, nationally, and around the world.

These changes and realizations are important in my life because I want to be an involved, empathetic and helpful citizen in the world. Realizing my own independence and gaining confidence will allow me to be more successful in accomplishing this goal. I think that traveling and connecting with people who live very different lives than mine is a good method to become more open-minded, and I would like to travel more in the future. In addition, I want to be a pharmacist, and learning the components of pharmacy that work well in other systems can help to improve the system in the United States. It reminds me that I am a part of the bigger whole and that what I will be doing in my day-to-day work is very important and helpful to patients. Also, in this time of political change and activism (and that of years to come), it is important to know what pharmacists should be working towards so that they can prepare, organize and rally to achieve roles that allow them to help the most patients.



The tea and scones from Sally Lunn's, in Bath, England.



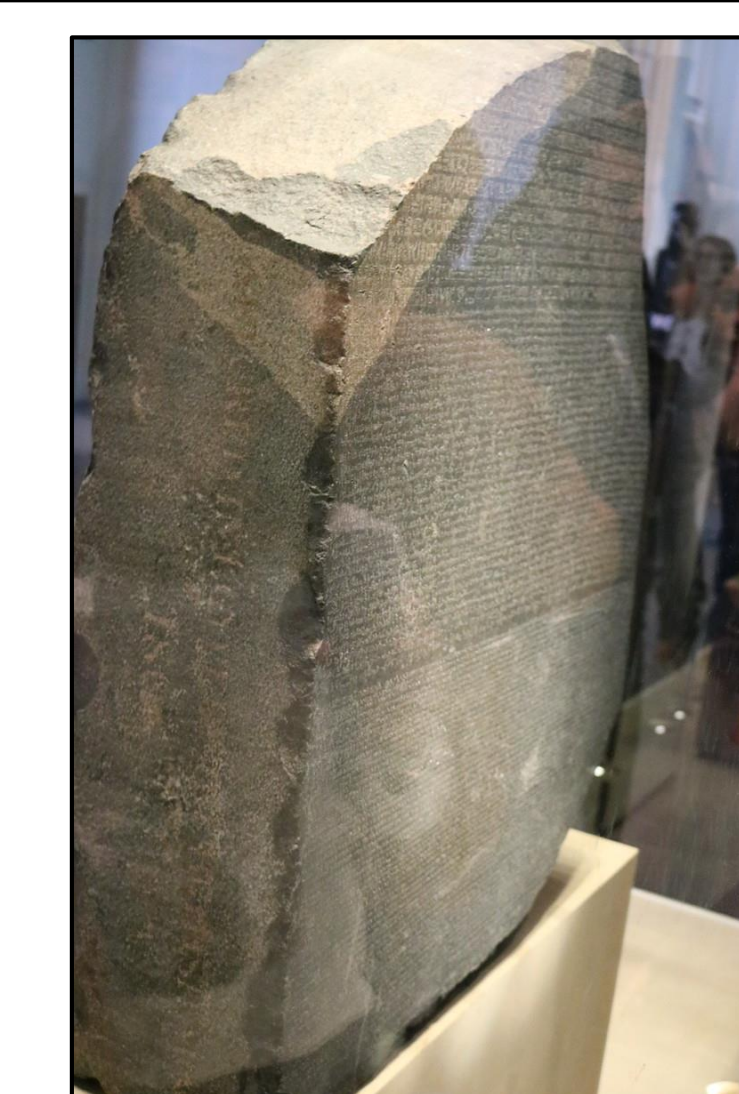
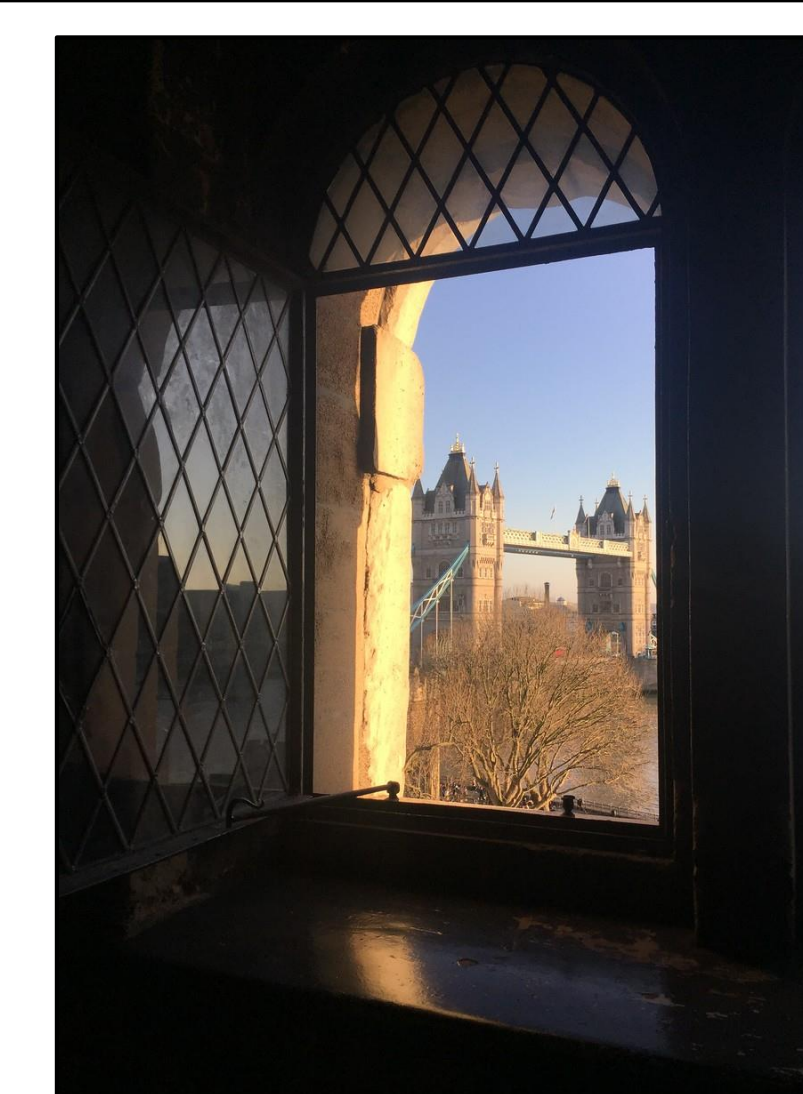
Me pretending use one of the famous red telephone boxes.

Personal Impact: Before going on this study abroad trip, I had never left the United States before, nor had I traveled very far from home without my parents or a close family friend. Although this trip was a group trip and there were some advisors that traveled with us and organized the trip, I became much more comfortable in being self-reliant and independent.

Throughout the week, my roommate and I became very comfortable with London's underground subway system, or the "Tube" as it is affectionately called by its passengers. At first, I was very worried about getting lost or confused in the system because my sense of direction is not very good, but by the end of the week, we were experts at using it! This showed me that with a little bit of work and practice, I can be successful at something that made me nervous and that sometimes things are much more user-friendly than we think.

Another experience that allowed me to work on my independence was when I found out that all of my twenty-pound notes were expired when trying to pay for admission to the Globe Theatre. My dad had given me his leftover pounds from his last business trip, and we thought that they would work just fine! However, every now and then, the Bank of England retires the physical bills (probably to prevent counterfeiting). The currency is slowly phased out – first, stores will stop taking it, then local banks, and then finally the only place where you can exchange them for new, current money is the Bank of England! It had been so long since my dad's last trip to England that my twenty-pound notes were expired and only the Bank of England could exchange them. I had to research how to exchange notes, figure out where the Bank of England was (thankfully, in London), plan how to get there during a busy day, and finally execute my plan. After taking the Tube there and explaining my situation to a few different people, I got to the right place and was able to exchange my money. This was a scary but transformational experience. Taking a problem and figuring out how to solve it in an unfamiliar place without my parents showed me that I am a lot more resourceful than I thought I was, and I feel much more capable of being independent than before the trip.

Now, I'm less afraid to try new things and travel on my own. This summer, I went on a cruise to the Cayman Islands and Jamaica with my friends that we all planned together, and I am planning on taking another trip to Italy with the College of Pharmacy over spring break of this year.



My favorite part: It is very hard to pick a favorite part, but the very first thing that comes to mind is the tea parlor that we visited on one of the first days of the trip. During our day trip to Bath, we visited a tea shop called Sally Lunn's, and they served an afternoon tea. I love tea and coffee, and it was really nice to sit in the warm little parlor and people-watch to get out of the damp weather for a little while. I also have Celiac Disease, and this was one of the first places that I ate, and they had some really good gluten free food. I remember feeling so happy and welcome, which was very heartening on one of the first "real days" of the trip. I also really enjoyed the British Museum. We spent hours there, and I still feel like I've hardly seen anything that it has to offer, so I would love to go back to see it again sometime.